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Presentation of the Lord

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of the Works of Adrienne von Speyr

<i>AmL</i>	=	<i>Aus meinem Leben</i>
<i>Ap</i>	=	<i>Die Apokalypse</i>
<i>B</i>	=	<i>Bergpredigt</i>
<i>Be</i>	=	<i>Die Beichte</i>
<i>BG</i>	=	<i>Bei Gott und bei den Menschen</i>
<i>Chr</i>	=	<i>Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe</i>
<i>Ep</i>	=	<i>Der Epheserbrief</i>
<i>F</i>	=	<i>Sie folgten seinem Ruf</i>
<i>Hl</i>	=	<i>Das Hohelied</i>
<i>Jo I</i>	=	<i>Johannes I: Das Wort wird Fleisch</i>
<i>Jo II</i>	=	<i>Johannes II: Die Streitreden</i>
<i>Jo III</i>	=	<i>Johannes III: Die Abschiedsreden</i>
<i>Jo IV</i>	=	<i>Johannes IV: Geburt der Kirche</i>
<i>K</i>	=	<i>Der Kolosserbrief</i>
<i>I K</i>	=	<i>Korinther I</i>
<i>Ka I</i>	=	<i>Katholische Briefe I: Der Jakobusbrief, Die Petrusbriefe</i>
<i>KW</i>	=	<i>Kreuzeswort und Sakrament</i>
<i>M</i>	=	<i>Der Mensch vor Gott</i>
<i>Ma</i>	=	<i>Markus</i>
<i>MH</i>	=	<i>Magd des Herrn</i>
<i>NB I/1</i>	=	<i>Das Allerheiligenbuch, Band I, Erster Teil</i>
<i>NB I/2</i>	=	<i>Das Allerheiligenbuch, Band I, Zweiter Teil</i>
<i>NB V</i>	=	<i>Das Wort und die Mystik I: Subjektive Mystik</i>
<i>NB VI</i>	=	<i>Das Wort und die Mystik II: Objektive Mystik</i>
<i>NB VII</i>	=	<i>Geheimnis der Jugend</i>
<i>NBVIII</i>	=	<i>Erde und Himmel I</i>
<i>NB IX</i>	=	<i>Erde und Himmel II</i>
<i>NB X</i>	=	<i>Erde und Himmel III</i>
<i>NB XII</i>	=	<i>Theologie der Geschlechter</i>
<i>Pa</i>	=	<i>Passion von Innen</i>
<i>Ps</i>	=	<i>Achtzehn Psalmen</i>
<i>Sc</i>	=	<i>Die Schöpfung</i>
<i>St</i>	=	<i>Christlicher Stand</i>
<i>T</i>	=	<i>Geheimnis des Todes</i>
<i>W</i>	=	<i>Die Welt des Gebetes</i>

Abbreviations of the Biblical Books

<i>Col</i>	=	<i>The Letter to the Colossians</i>
<i>Eph</i>	=	<i>The Letter to the Ephesians</i>
<i>Gn</i>	=	<i>The Book of Genesis</i>
<i>Jn</i>	=	<i>The Gospel According to John</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Mk</i>	=	<i>The Gospel According to Mark</i>
<i>Mt</i>	=	<i>The Gospel According to Matthew</i>
<i>Sg</i>	=	<i>The Song of Songs</i>
<i>1 Co</i>	=	<i>The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians</i>
<i>1 P</i>	=	<i>The First Letter of Peter</i>

Abbreviations of Magisterial Texts

<i>ADS</i>	=	<i>Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae</i>
<i>CC</i>	=	<i>Casti Connubii</i>
<i>CCC</i>	=	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>CIC</i>	=	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law)</i>
<i>DIM</i>	=	<i>Divini Illus Magistri</i>
<i>FC</i>	=	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
<i>GS</i>	=	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
<i>HV</i>	=	<i>Humanae Vitae</i>
<i>LF</i>	=	<i>Letter to Families</i>
<i>LG</i>	=	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
<i>MD</i>	=	<i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i>
<i>MM</i>	=	<i>Matrimonio Mixta</i>
<i>RM</i>	=	<i>Redemptoris Mater</i>
<i>RP</i>	=	<i>Reconciliatio et Paenitentia</i>
<i>SC</i>	=	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>

Abbreviations of Other Works

<i>AAS</i>	=	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
<i>EF</i>	=	<i>Enchiridion Familiae (Textos del Magistero Pontificio e Conciliar sobre el Matrimonio y la Familia, Siglos I a XX. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S.A., 1992)</i>
<i>PL</i>	=	<i>Patrologia Latina (J.P. Migne, series latina)</i>
<i>PLS</i>	=	<i>Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum (ed. A. Hamann, Paris, 1957)</i>
<i>PG</i>	=	<i>Patrologia Graeca (J.P. Migne, series graeca)</i>
<i>RSV</i>	=	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>

Other Abbreviations and Signs

<i>AA.VV.</i>	=	various authors
<i>bk.</i>	=	book number
<i>Cf.</i>	=	Confer or “see”
<i>den.</i>	=	diary entry number
<i>Eadem</i>	=	“the same;” used when a work is cited by the same authoress as the preceding citation within the same footnote
<i>ed.</i>	=	editor; edited by
<i>Idem</i>	=	“the same;” used when a work is cited by the same author as the preceding citation within the same footnote
<i>intro.</i>	=	introduction
<i>n.</i>	=	footnote number

ABBREVIATIONS

no.	=	number
p.	=	page number
par.	=	paragraph number
pp.	=	page numbers
q.	=	question number
transl.	=	translator or translators
§	=	paragraph number

General Introduction

In 1981, Pope John Paul II wrote in *Familiaris Consortio* that the institutions of marriage and family have been overshadowed by negative aspects as well as brightened by positive developments. On the negative side, John Paul wrote:

[S]igns are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values: a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality.¹

Clearly, Christian marriage is facing a crisis which cannot be overcome without addressing its very foundations. A mere external renewal, for example in the form of new secular laws, would prove to be insufficient to offset the crisis.

On the positive side, over the last forty years, with the benefit of the teachings of Vatican Council II, marriage and family studies have penetrated more profoundly into the mysteries of the sacrament of marriage. It has been better clarified how spouses achieve sanctity in marriage, how they live a truly sacramental life and how they participate in the union of Christ with his Church. Furthermore, aided by the contributions of Pope John Paul II, a rich theological anthropology of the man-woman relationship has been more brightly illuminated. Gradually, a spirituality of marriage and family is being developed which is grounded on these theological principles. Nonetheless, a number of theologians underscore the need to further develop a theological spirituality of marriage.

Among these theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar has written that during this time of much confusion regarding human sexuality, it is crucial that the man-woman relationship be understood in a profound theological light. It is especially imperative that it be seen more clearly how Christian spouses are an image of the nuptial relationship between Christ and his Church.² Only a fresh look on biblical revelation can provide this new light to penetrate the deepening crisis in faith and culture which has jolted the institutions of marriage and family.

¹FC, 6.

²Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Das Hohelied* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1972) 5-6: "Nothing could be more contemporary than the deepening of this nuptial mystery between Christ and the Church; an effective reform of the Church can arise solely from this mystery, and not from changes in traditional structures." *Das Hohelied* is hereafter cited as *HL*. Page references to the German text will be noted in the usual manner, following the title of the book. It will be noted when an English translation of a particular book is available. Furthermore, the pages of the English text which correspond to the cited original German text will be noted in brackets []. All translations of cited texts are mine except for a few works by von Balthasar and others where the title is given *only in English*. The translations for citations from these works are provided by the translator of the respective work.

In this thesis, we examine Adrienne von Speyr's contribution to the theological spirituality of marriage and family. From her unique experience as a married woman, medical doctor, convert and mystic and in her collaboration with Hans Urs von Balthasar, she brings a significant contribution to the development of an authentic "theological" spirituality of marriage. While a number of authors have made recent attempts to address matrimonial questions by departing from various theological viewpoints and by drawing on the different human sciences, Adrienne von Speyr concentrates on biblical revelation and theological meditation, while at the same time, drawing from her rich family and medical experience. In order to provide an ecclesial context to her theological understanding, it is useful to highlight some recent developments in magisterial teachings and in marriage and family studies.

The Teachings of Vatican II on Marriage and Family

At Vatican II, new light was shed on a number of important teachings on marriage and family. For one, it was emphasized that Christian spouses achieve sanctity within their own state of marriage. Moreover, a deeper understanding of the personalistic foundations of marriage was reached and it was underscored that spouses participate genuinely in divine love. Furthermore, the Vatican documents encouraged men and women to nurture an active sacramental life.

Regarding the *sanctity of marriage*, it was affirmed that "all the faithful, whatever their condition or state--though each in his own way--are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect."³ Therefore, it was stressed that Christian spouses strive towards sanctification within their own state of life. Indeed, "the married partners have their own proper vocation: they must be witnesses of faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children."⁴

Furthermore, Vatican II opened the way for a more *personalistic understanding* of the man-woman relationship when it taught that the exercise of the acts that are proper to marriage "fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude."⁵ Through the giving of oneself to the other, therefore, the spouses "signify and share the mystery of the unity of the faithful love between Christ and the Church."⁶ Constituting the "domestic Church,"⁷ the spouses and their children insure that Christ is present in their midst and they work towards building up the Church as a whole. In this way, spouses and family members strive towards sanctification and perfection by giving of themselves selflessly in imitation of Christ and thereby allowing themselves to be embraced by the same love that the Lord has for his Church.

³LG, 11.

⁴LG, 35. Cf. LG, 41: "Christian married couples and parents, following their own way, should support one another in grace all through life with faithful love, and should train their children (lovingly received from God) in Christian doctrine and evangelical virtues."

⁵GS, 49.

⁶LG, 11. Cf. Eph 5, 32.

⁷Cf. LG, 11: "In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children."

In addition, it was underlined that *spouses participate genuinely in divine love*. *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 noted:

Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church, with the result that the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as fathers and mothers. Spouses, therefore, are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament; fulfilling their conjugal and family role by virtue of this sacrament, spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ and their whole life is suffused by faith, hope, and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God.⁸

This dense passage employs a number of rich and vivid verbs which describe the mysterious relationship between the spouses and their Creator. The spouses' love is *caught up, directed, enriched, led, helped, strengthened, fortified, consecrated, penetrated* and *suffused* by God's love. This important paragraph underscores that God invites spouses to be active participants in his life. He longs for them to accept his invitation that their union be grafted into the Christ-Church covenant so that he can shower upon them his abundant grace.

Although the Council did not give a detailed theology of *sacramental life* in marriage, it did highlight that "each of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will with deeds, with the help of his grace; he must frequently partake of the sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist, and take part in the liturgy."⁹ Moreover, the Council fathers wrote that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows."¹⁰ Furthermore, it was noted: "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example and by prayer labors for their conversion."¹¹

In conclusion, it can be said that reflecting the Council's overall christocentric emphasis (i.e. *GS*, 22), the Council fathers highlighted that *sanctity in marriage* is achieved primarily through participation in Christ's self-giving. Overcoming a mere juridical view of marriage that had been prevalent in Catholic theology for centuries, the Council documents viewed Christian marriage in more *personalistic* terms where the positive values of conjugal love were emphasized.¹² Moreover, the Council fathers opened the way for a

⁸*GS*, 48.

⁹*LG*, 42.

¹⁰*SC*, 10.

¹¹*LG*, 11.

¹²Cf. Carlo Rocchetta, "Marriage as a Sacrament" in AA.VV., *Christian Marriage Today* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997) ed. Klaus Demmer and Aldegonde Brenninkemeijer-Wehrhahn, 56. Rocchetta writes: "To this general consideration must be added the almost exclusively juridical and moralistic thrust of theological thinking on marriage, in particular from the end of the Council of Trent until a few decades ago. In works of theology, the study of marriage was often included in the juridical section and, in any event, limited to the consideration of the institution of the sacrament by Christ, and of points of matter and form, of the minister and the subject, following an approach that bore the imprint

more profound understanding of marriage as a *participation in divine life* and specifically, as an *insertion into Christ's union with his Church*. Finally, the way was opened for a more profound *theology of sacramental life* in marriage.

The Teachings of John Paul II on Marriage and Family

Throughout his papacy, John Paul II has tirelessly defended the values of marriage and family in the face of a society which has become increasingly secularized and has undergone a severe cultural crisis which affects deeply the relationship of man and woman. Furthermore, the Holy Father has sought to penetrate more profoundly the doctrinal truths of the marriage sacrament. For example, in his *Wednesday Catechisms on Human and Divine Love* (1979-1984), the Pontiff explored the biblical, anthropological, doctrinal and moral foundations of marriage and family. Indeed, the insights from the *Wednesday Catechisms* were already foreshadowed in his pre-papacy book, *Love and Responsibility*. Moreover, his apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) was the first comprehensive treatise on marriage since Pope Pius XI's great encyclical, *Casti Connubii* (1930). As "the most energetic proponent and expositor of the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae*,"¹³ John Paul II has repeatedly defended the value of human life "from womb to tomb" as evidenced in *Evangelium Vitae*. He has underscored the dignity and vocation of women in *Mulieris Dignitatem* and the *Letter to Women* and the positive aspects of the family, fatherhood and motherhood in the *Letter to Families*.

Specifically, Pope John Paul II has exhorted spouses and families regarding the importance of maintaining an active *sacramental life*. Noting that in the Eucharist, the spouses "encounter the source from which their own marriage flows," John Paul affirms that they participate in the Christ-Church union not only *spiritually*, but also *bodily*.¹⁴ Regarding the sacrament of penance, the Pope explains: "Repentance and mutual pardon within the bosom of the Christian family, so much a part of daily life, receive their specific sacramental expression in Christian Penance."¹⁵ In this way, family members do not merely *receive* the grace of confession, but they *actualize* it, imitating Christ, the "Great Forgiver," thereby allowing it to transform their day to day lives.

Expanding on the affirmation of *Gaudium et Spes*, 48 regarding *spousal participation in divine life*, John Paul II has indicated that spouses not only participate in divine life, but also, in their unity, they are an image of the unity between the Persons of the

of canon law rather than that of the sources of revelation. This being the case, it is not surprising that a true and proper spirituality of conjugal life was almost entirely missing." As an example of the juridical treatment of marriage, Rocchetta cites: G. van Noort, *De Sacramentis*, 2 volumes (Hilversum, Netherlands: n.p., 1930). After treating the other six sacraments in detail, van Noort writes: "Marriage is not dealt with in this treatise because amongst us, as in many centres of learning, the whole study of marriage takes place in the courses on Canon Law." (Vol. 2, p. 127).

¹³Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae, A Generation Later* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991) 230.

¹⁴FC, 57.

¹⁵FC, 58.

Trinity.¹⁶ Indeed, it is the spouses' unity which opens them towards new life in the form of God-given spiritual and bodily fruitfulness.¹⁷ In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul II was even more specific when he wrote: "It also means that man and woman, created as a 'unity of the two' in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life."¹⁸

Above all, the Holy Father has penetrated more profoundly the Council's doctrinal insights on marriage and family and has indefatigably preached their pastoral applications. He has repeatedly impressed upon spouses and families the importance of growing in sanctity, not only for their own spiritual growth on earth and for their salvation in heaven, but also for the good of the Church and the world. The Holy Father's message is truly a "new evangelization." Although he has grappled with age-old realities, he has shed new light on them and uncovered pearls of truth regarding God and man.

Current Studies of Marriage and Family

Departing from the inspirations of Vatican II, current studies on marriage and family have continued to work towards a better understanding of marriage under its spiritual-sacramental, christo-ecclesial and trinitarian dimensions. In particular, the following challenges and trends have emerged:

1) A stronger link between the sacramentality and spirituality of marriage needs to be shown.

It is clear from *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* that a specific conjugal-familial spirituality does exist which is rooted in the sacrament of marriage. Nonetheless, Dionigi Tettamanzi asserts that the Vatican II texts are limited in their approach to the spiritual-sacramental life of the couple and the family. Although the documents note the connection between spousal-familial spirituality and the sacrament of marriage, they do not elaborate on it.¹⁹

Echoing Tettamanzi, Giuseppe Baldanza laments that, in recent years, theologians have not been particularly successful in building a bridge between systematic sacramental theology of marriage and the spirituality of marriage:

[It] is the task of matrimonial systematic theology to aid the promotion of such a spirituality. In past years, it has been noted that there exists almost a discrepancy between matrimonial spirituality and systematic reflection. This has not been of particular assistance to Christian spouses. [...]

¹⁶Cf. *LF*, 6: "In the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how the *primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine "We" is the eternal pattern of the human "we," especially of that "we" formed by the man and woman created in the divine image and likeness."

¹⁷Cf. *LF*, 8: "Their unity, however, rather than closing them up in themselves, opens them towards a new life, towards a new person."

¹⁸Cf. *MD*, 7.

¹⁹Cf. Dionigi Tettamanzi, *La famiglia via della chiesa* (Milano: Editrice Massimo, 1991²) 228-229. "I testi del Vaticano II sembrano limitarsi ad accostare tra loro la vita spirituale della coppia e la vita spirituale della famiglia, senza un particolare sforzo di precisarne il rapporto in riferimento al sacramento del matrimonio e al suo specifico influsso sulla famiglia." (p. 229) Cf. *LG*, 11.35.41; *GS*, 48.

Systematic theology will fulfill its task in the future if it would give importance to the specific grace of the sacrament of marriage.²⁰

Noting that spousal spirituality embraces quotidian matrimonial life in all its aspects---physical, psychic, intellectual, moral and social---Baldanza, like Tettamanzi, calls for a spirituality of marriage which is grounded in its sacramentality.

Along the same lines, Carlo Rocchetta underscores that the spirituality of conjugal sexuality must also be tied to the sacramentality of marriage. Conjugal love and the grace of the sacrament of marriage cannot be considered as two intersecting external realities. Instead, they are to be understood as two intertwining realities which comprise the inner mystery of the marriage relationship. Rocchetta writes: “[It] is the human reality of conjugal love which becomes sacrament in the same way in which the sacrament neither negates nor annuls the human reality of conjugal love, but [the sacrament] rejuvenates [conjugal love], supports and sanctifies it, making it participate in the mystery of grace that flows between Christ and the Church.”²¹ Rocchetta emphasizes that it is precisely the task of dogmatic theology to strengthen its understanding of the unity between conjugal sexual love and sacramentality. Moreover, a theology of marriage which is able to fully appreciate this connection will always value conjugal sexuality.²²

2) It must be better understood how spouses receive matrimonial grace as a couple.

Departing from *Gaudium et Spes*, 48, theologians have grown in their understanding of how Christian spouses receive and participate in the grace of matrimony *as a couple*, unlike the other sacraments where grace is encountered individually. John Paul II explains:

The spouses participate in marriage insofar as they are spouses, in two, as a couple, to the point that the primary and immediate effect of matrimony (*res et sacramentum*) is not the supernatural grace itself, but the Christian conjugal bond, a communion of two persons that is typically Christian because it represents the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ and his mystery of covenant. And the contents of the participation in the life of Christ are also specific: conjugal love comports a totality in which all the components of the person---I am referring here to the body, instinct, the power of sentiment and affectivity, the aspiration of the spirit and of the will---; this points to a profoundly personal unity which goes beyond the union in one flesh to a union of none other than one heart and one soul; this demands the indissolubility and fidelity of definitive reciprocal giving

²⁰Giuseppe Baldanza, *La grazia del sacramento del matrimonio, Contributo per la riflessione teologica* (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 1993) 297-298.

²¹Carlo Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia, Saggio di teologia del matrimonio cristiano* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1996), 99-100. Cf. Idem, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 7-13. Rocchetta explains that his departure point for his book is Schillebeeckx's insight that it is precisely the interpersonal relationship of the two spouses which becomes sacrament. [Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Il matrimonio è un sacramento* (Milano: Ancora, 1963) 23-24.] Rocchetta, therefore, wants to develop the *anthropological* dimensions of this “sacrament of the couple.” (p. 10)

²²C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 100.

and opens out into fruitfulness.²³

In this way, the spouses' giving of each other in the flesh is a sign of the more profound giving of heart and soul which the spouses consented to on their wedding day and continue to consent to every day of their lives.

Thus, with the sacrament of marriage, the spouses are assumed as a covenant and raised up to be an image and efficacious sign of the love which the Lord has for his Church. The sacramentality of marriage, therefore, is necessarily embedded in the reciprocal consent of the spouses to love each other for life.²⁴ The more perfectly each spouse gives oneself to the other, the more he or she can be a sign of Christ's love to others. Most importantly, the spouses' mutual self-giving enables them to participate intimately in the infinite love that Christ has for his Church and to be bathed in the fruitfulness that pours forth from the Christ-Church union. In this way, matrimonial consent is tied to the specific grace of marriage which the spouses receive as a couple.

Because the spouses actually *participate* in the Christ-Church union, conjugal spirituality should not consider the Lord's bond with his Church as a model merely *to be imitated*. Baldanza notes that this Christo-ecclesial-spousal participation is the heart and source of matrimonial spirituality. In order to deepen the understanding of this unique participation, Baldanza recommends that the relationship between marriage and the Eucharist be understood in a more profound way. He writes: "[T]he best comprehension of the sacramentality of matrimony (and therefore of matrimonial grace) is given in the Eucharist. In this context, one needs to clarify better how conjugal and familial life is a spiritual sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ and how this is offered in the Eucharist to the Father together with the oblation of the Lord's body."²⁵

3. The ecclesial understanding of marriage continues to be further developed.

Departing from the idea that the Church is the "fundamental sacrament" which is expressed and fulfilled in the sacraments, a number of German theologians have opened the way for a more developed *ecclesiology* of marriage. By showing that the Church does not only dispense the sacraments, but also that she depends on them for her further growth and efficaciousness in the world, these theologians have drawn a closer link between the Church and the sacraments in general, and between the Church and the sacrament of marriage in particular.²⁶ Otto Hermann Pesch distinguishes four lines of development. First, the Church and marriage can be understood under an *institutional* perspective whereby the Church is the original image [*Urbild*] and marriage is the image [*Abbild*] derived from it.²⁷ Second,

²³John Paul II, Allocution given to the 'Centre de Liaison des Equipes de Recherche' (November 3, 1979), no. 13. Cf. *HV*, 9.

²⁴Cf. D. Tettamanzi, *La famiglia via della chiesa*, 231-232. Cf. *GS*, 48d. Cf. *Eph* 5, 21-33.

²⁵G. Baldanza, *La grazia del sacramento del matrimonio*, 296-297. Cf. *LG*, 34.

²⁶Cf. Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1963) Transl. W.J. O'Hara, 18: "By the very fact of being in that way the enduring presence of Christ in the world, the Church is truly the fundamental sacrament, the well-spring of the sacraments in the strict sense. From Christ the Church has an intrinsically sacramental structure."

²⁷Cf. Otto Hermann Pesch, "Ehe im Blick des Glaubens" in AA.VV., *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft, Teilband 7, Enzyklopädische Bibliothek* (Freiburg: Herder, 1981) 19-20. Pesch names several theologians who espouse this model. Cf. Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik, Vol. IV/I*.

the Church and marriage are perceived in a *historical-salvific* light. Under this way of thinking, the Church is seen as the fulfillment of the history of salvation, awaiting the Second Coming of Christ. Thus, redeemed matrimony (*Eph* 5) is the fulfillment of original paradisaal marriage (*Gn* 2, 23), as well as, the Old Testament understanding of the covenant between God and Israel. Although their interpretations differ somewhat, Joseph Auer, Raphael Schulte, Joseph Ratzinger, Leonardo Boff and Karl Lehmann hold this second ecclesiological view of marriage.²⁸

Third, under the *anthropological* perspective, marriage is seen as the realm where man realizes himself through his love for the other. Since human love is always, at least indirectly, an experience of divine love, marriage also becomes a way of experiencing the love of God. Under this scheme, the Church's role is to testify to God's love for man. In this way, the Church represents the "large" version of what faithful married persons experience in the "small" version. Karl Rahner, Walter Kasper, K. Lehmann, Joseph Gründel and Theodor Schneider propose this model.²⁹ Fourth, under the *ethical* perspective, it is underscored that, inasmuch as it is a sacrament, marriage demands a specific Christian comportment. Therefore, only when the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are truly lived, can the sacramental character of marriage—and therefore also of the Church—be made visible. Among those who propose this fourth model are Johannes Duss-von-Werdt and Heribert Mühlen.³⁰

(München: Hüber, 1960⁶) § 287 in connection with § 289.; Hermann Volk, *Das Sakrament der Ehe* (Mainz: Verlag Regensburg: 1959); Karl Lehmann, "Glaube--Taufe--Ehesakrament, Dogmatische Überlegung zur Sakramentalität der christlichen Ehe" in *Studia Moralia* 16 (1978) 71-97. Cf. Giuseppe Colombo, *Teologia Sacramentaria* (Milano: Glossa, 1997) 559.

²⁸Cf. O. H. Pesch, "Ehe im Blick des Glaubens," 20-21. Cf. Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, *Kleine Katholische Dogmatik*, Vol. 7 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1972); J. Ratzinger, "Zur Theologie der Ehe" in AA.VV., *Theologie der Ehe* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1972²) ed. Heinrich Greeven and J. Ratzinger, 81-116; Raphael Schulte, "Die Einzelsakramente als Ausgliederung des Wurzelsakramentes" in *Mysterium Salutis* IV/2 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965) 100-102.136-139; Leonardo Boff, "Das Sakrament der Ehe" in *Concilium* 9 (1973) 459-465. Cf. G. Colombo, *Teologia Sacramentaria*, 560.

²⁹Cf. O. H. Pesch, "Ehe im Blick des Glaubens," 21-23. Cf. K. Rahner, "Ehe als Sakrament" in K. Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie*, Vol. VIII (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1954) 519-540. Cf. Walter Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage* (New York: Crossroad, 1980) 38: "Married and family life are in a very special sense the Church in miniature---Vatican II spoke of the family as the 'domestic Church.' In this function, married and family life are not, however, simply a development of the essential being of the Church. They in fact make an active contribution to the building up of the Church." Cf. Karl Lehmann, "Zur Sakramentalität der Ehe" in AA.VV., *Ehe und Ehescheidung, Diskussion unter Christen* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1972) ed. Franz Henrich and Volker Eid, 57-72; Joseph Gründel, *Die Zukunft der christlichen Ehe, Erwartungen, Konflikte, Orientierungshilfe* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 1979) 57-65; Theodor Schneider, *Zeichen der Nähe Gottes, Grundriß der Sakramententheologie* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1979) 278-293. Cf. G. Colombo, *Teologia Sacramentaria*, 560.

³⁰Cf. O. H. Pesch, "Ehe im Blick des Glaubens," 23. Cf. Johannes Duss-von-Werdt, "Theologie der Ehe, Der sakramentale Charakter der Ehe" in *Mysterium Salutis* IV/2 (Zürich, 1973) 422-448; Heribert Mühlen, "Ehe als Dienst" in *Lebendiges Zeugnis* (October, 1973) 5-18. Cf. G. Colombo, *Teologia Sacramentaria*, 560-561.

4. Scholars have indicated the need to develop the trinitarian dimension of marriage.

Christian marriage must be understood not only as an image of the Christ-Church union, but also as an image of the divine Trinity. In departing from *Ephesians* 5, the classical theology of marriage has mainly focused on the christo-ecclesial dimension of the sacrament. Nonetheless, marriage has to be seen in a trinitarian light. By considering the trinitarian dimensions of marriage, one avoids narrowing the man-woman union to a dualistic reality. Moreover, a trinitarian theology of marriage illuminates the role of the Holy Spirit in marriage and opens up the way for a corresponding theology of the family.³¹ Developing a spousal-familial spirituality which draws from a trinitarian theology helps to understand how spouses not only imitate the giving and receiving of the divine Persons, but also how they participate in the trinitarian communion of life. In both their *imitation of* and *participation in* trinitarian life, spouses and family members offer to the world a much needed witness of selfless giving and loving receptivity.³²

Summarizing our observations, it can be affirmed that a profound theology of marriage and family should strive to:

- build a strong link between the sacramentality and spirituality of marriage
- explain the connection between conjugal sexual love and sanctification
- illuminate how spouses not only *imitate*, but also *participate in* the Christ-Church union
- draw the connection between consent and sacramentality
- elaborate on the grace of the sacraments of Eucharist and confession in marriage
- embrace daily matrimonial life in all its aspects
- develop a profound understanding of the ecclesial and trinitarian dimensions

In this thesis, we would like to examine how and to what extent Adrienne von Speyr addresses these needs and challenges.

Why should Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage be studied?

One might ask why Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage should be studied in the first place. Since her writings were produced before the end of Vatican Council II, during which much new light was shed on marriage and family, would not it be more helpful to study the writings of another writer with more recent contributions? It would be

³¹Cf. C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 278.

³²Cf. Marc Ouellet, "Lo Spirito Santo sigillo dell'alleanza coniugale" in AA.VV., *Il matrimonio in Cristo è matrimonio nello Spirito* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1998) Ed. Renzo Bonetti, 95: "L'ora della spiritualità coniugale e familiare è dunque l'ora del trascendimento di sé ad immagine della Trinità, memoria e profezia delle meraviglie della storia della salvezza." Cf. Pierre Adnès, "Matrimonio e Mistero Trinitario" in AA.VV., *Amore e stabilità nel matrimonio* (Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1976) 25: "Questa comunità [trinitaria] ha bisogno sulla terra, nel mondo in cui viviamo e che vien detto secolarizzato, di testimoni inconfutabili. Gli sposi cristiani sono per vocazione il segno vivente che deve svelare lo splendore e la realtà presente della vita trinitaria, di cui il sacramento li ha resi sacramentalmente partecipi." Cf. *LF*, 6; *MD*, 7.

good to study Adrienne von Speyr's contributions to marriage and family studies for several reasons. First, it seems evident that Dr. von Speyr does address a number of the needs and challenges of current marriage and family studies. Although she wrote only two books which treat exclusively the themes of marriage or the man-woman relationship, it is clear that throughout her sixty volumes of published works, she does examine these themes and that she does so precisely in the light of the Trinity, Christ and the Church as Vatican II had encouraged. Furthermore, as a lay married woman and medical doctor, Adrienne von Speyr wrote on marriage and family drawing from ample first-hand experience. In her profession, not only did many patients come to her for advice regarding difficulties that arise before and during marriage, but also she advised those who would counsel married persons. Moreover, as will be explained in more detail in *Chapter One*, in her married life, Adrienne grappled with many of the same issues that every spouse confronts from time to time.

A second reason to study the writings of Adrienne von Speyr lies in her connection to Hans Urs von Balthasar, a prominent theologian of the twentieth century. Von Balthasar himself has acknowledged (as will be elaborated in *Chapter One*) that the contributions of Adrienne von Speyr have played an indispensable role in the development of his own theology. Therefore, it would be helpful to study one of von Balthasar's sources which he considers to be of primary importance since he, like Adrienne, has treated the themes of marriage, the man-woman relationship, human sexuality and other related themes in a number of his works.³³ Indeed, it is clear that the theme of marriage was not foreign to von Balthasar. One theologian notes that "perhaps more than any other contemporary theologian, [von Balthasar] has penetrated to the profound depths of the personal and christological foundations of marriage."³⁴ Finally, although a number of important works have emerged in recent years which treat von Balthasar's thought on human sexuality, marriage, his trinitarian theology and other similar topics, no work has focused exclusively on Adrienne

³³Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1977) [English translation: Idem, *The Christian State of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983) trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy]; Idem, "Ein Wort zu Humanae Vitae" in *Neue Klarstellungen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1995²) 119-128. [English translation: Idem, "A Word on 'Humanae Vitae'" in *New Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) transl. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, 204-228. The German edition differs slightly from the English version. The article was originally a talk given by von Balthasar in English at a convention in 1978.]; Idem, "Incontro coniugale" in *Lo Spirito e l'istituzione, Saggi teologici, Vol. V* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1979) 179-186. Christoph Kaiser, *Theologie der Ehe, Der Beitrag von Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1997) 24-34. Here Kaiser lays out in chronological order the main passages where von Balthasar takes up the theme of marriage. Kaiser also indicates von Speyr's influence on von Balthasar's theology of the sexes: "Während v.Balthasar nirgendwo eine Theologie der Ehe expliziert, entfaltet er eine Theologie der Geschlechter explizit und ausführlich vor allem in *Theodrammatik 2/1*, 334-350 und *Theodrammatik 2/2*, 269-330. V.Balthasar ist dabei von Adrienne von Speyr beeinflusst und folgt im Gesamtaufriß ihrem Entwurf." (p. 39) Moreover, Kaiser indicates other themes which von Balthasar developed with the help of von Speyr's insights: the "two states of life" (p. 161, n. 197), "love in the Trinity" (p. 205, nn. 65-66) and "man and woman as image of God" (p. 73, n. 25).

³⁴John J. O'Donnell, S.I., "H.U. von Balthasar sulla teologia del matrimonio" in *Civiltà Cattolica* 139 (1988/III) 483.

von Speyr's contributions.³⁵ This thesis attempts to fill that gap.

A third reason to study Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage is based on Pope John Paul II's own interest in examining and promoting her works. As will be noted in more detail in *Chapter One*, in 1983, the Holy Father requested that a symposium be held on Dr. von Speyr's life and works. This symposium eventually took place in September 1985 at the *John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family* at the *Pontifical Lateran University*. In addition to his "Symposium Greeting" where, in reference to von Speyr, John Paul II noted that "the Church always needs the example of lay men and women, especially those who are profoundly rooted in their professional life and, at the same time, immersed in God,"³⁶ the Supreme Pontiff has explicitly indicated his own interest in Adrienne von Speyr's writings.³⁷ Although it is not as easy to establish Adrienne von Speyr's *direct* influence---as it is to note von Balthasar's impact---on the Holy Father's thought, nonetheless it is safe to affirm that John Paul has at least been *indirectly* influenced by Dr. von Speyr's theological contributions.³⁸ Therefore, on this fifteenth anniversary of the 1985 symposium, for the three reasons cited above, it is fitting to consider the theme of Christian

³⁵Cf. Claudio Giuliodori, *Intelligenza teologica del maschile e del femminile, problemi e prospettive nella rilettura di von Balthasar e P. Evdokimov* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1991); Rudolf Zwank, *Geschlechteranthropologie in theologischer Perspektive? Zur Phänomenologie des Geschlechtlichen in Hans Urs von Balthasars "Theodramatik"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996); Christoph Kaiser, *Theologie der Ehe, Der Beitrag von Hans Urs von Balthasar*; Shaun L. Mahoney, *The Analogy between the Eucharist and Marriage according to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, unpublished doctoral thesis, 1999); Robert A. Pesarchick, *The Trinitarian Foundation of Human Sexuality in Christ According to Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Revelatory Significance of the Male Christ and the Male Ministerial Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, published doctoral thesis, 2000).

³⁶John Paul II, "Discorso del Santo Padre ai partecipanti" in A.A.VV., *La missione ecclesiale di Adrienne von Speyr, Atti del II Colloquio Internazionale del pensiero cattolico, 27-29 settembre 1985* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1986) Ed. H.U. von Balthasar, Georges Chantraine and Angelo Scola. Transl. Maria Tosetto, Luca Doninelli, Carlo Fedeli, 185. John Paul notes: "Infine, mi rallegro perché la Chiesa ha continuamente bisogno dell'esempio dei laici, specialmente di laici che siano profondamente radicati nella loro vita professionale ed al tempo stesso immersi in Dio." For some reason, this sentence does not appear in the German edition of the symposium (*Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*).

³⁷Cf. André Frossard, *Portrait of John Paul II* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988) 73-74. In discussing his prayer life, John Paul refers to a book by Adrienne von Speyr that he is currently reading.

³⁸Cf. George Weigel, *Witness to Hope, The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999) 565. Weigel notes both the Holy Father's desire to name von Balthasar a cardinal and the Swiss theologian's influence on the Pope: "One cardinal whom John Paul intended to appoint died two days before the public consistory: Hans Urs von Balthasar, the great Swiss theologian who was an important influence on John Paul's thinking and arguably the most creative Catholic theological mind of the century." Cf. *MD*, 27. It is rare for a Pope to refer to a contemporary theologian in an encyclical. However, here John Paul notes: "the Church is both 'Marian' and 'Apostolic Petrine.'" In the endnote, n. 55, citing von Balthasar's article "Frauenpriestertum?" [H.U. von Balthasar, *Neue Klarstellungen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1995²) 109-115], the Pope expands on von Balthasar's and von Speyr's understanding of the Marian and Petrine roles in the Church. Cf. *Subsection 1.3.2*. Cf. Jacques Servais, "Confession as a Sacrament of the Father of Mercy," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 26 (Summer 1999) Transl. Adrian Walker, 344. Servais notes the parallels in von Speyr's and John Paul's positive view of man and their understanding of the Father's role in the sacrament of confession: "The work of Adrienne von Speyr reflects a similar conviction, which is linked to an eminently positive sense of man. Von Speyr [...] began in the forties to develop essentially the same vision that Pope John Paul II has presented to us in our own time."

marriage in the writings of Adrienne von Speyr.

Methodology and Goal of the Dissertation

This thesis draws primarily from Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage. Because of the sheer quantity of the writings and their unique nature, it will be a challenge to study them. However, it is important to take into account the writings' quantity and nature in order to determine a proper methodology. The writings, which will be discussed in more detail in *Chapter One*, number some sixty volumes and fifteen thousand pages. As to their nature, we turn to T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), the American-born English poet, critic and playwright, who wrote an introduction to Adrienne von Speyr's commentary on the Gospel of John. Eliot writes:

Adrienne von Speyr's book does not lend itself to any classification that I can think of. It is not dogmatic theology; still less is it exegesis. It cannot be properly described as mysticism, or a skeptical theology; nor is it, in any usual sense, a book of meditation [...] there is nothing to do but submit oneself to it; if the reader emerges without having been crushed by it, he will find himself strengthened and exhilarated by a new experience of Christian sensibility.³⁹

Thus, because of the nature of the writings, Eliot recommends that one "submit" to them and allow oneself to be "crushed" by their message. To do this, one must pay careful attention to what is being communicated.

In order to study Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage and family, in a first step (Part I), it will be shown how the writings are fruit of the Swiss physician's life, mission and theological task which she shared with Hans Urs von Balthasar. In a second step (Parts II and III), we will attempt to "submit" to *what* and *how* Dr. von Speyr conveys her insights on marriage and family. In a third and final step (Part IV), we will examine more closely her contributions "in dialogue" with other contemporary theologians, especially John Paul II and Hans Urs von Balthasar.⁴⁰

Our overall goal will be to determine how Adrienne von Speyr addresses the challenges of current marriage and family studies which were identified above. Specifically, we would like to see if she grounds spousal-familial spirituality in a strong sacramental theology of marriage. Exposing the main themes of Christian marriage in von Speyr's writings within the context of a particular work in Parts II and III, we will be in a position to bring the themes together and to "dialogue" with other theologians in Part IV.⁴¹

³⁹T.S. Eliot, Review of A. von Speyr, *The Word: A Meditation on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel*. (London: Collins, 1953) Transl. A. Dru. T.S. Eliot's words are on the dust cover.

⁴⁰John Paul II and von Balthasar are natural choices not only because of their important contributions to marriage and family studies, but also because each has demonstrated personal interest in Adrienne's writings, as noted above. In other words, there is an organic connection between the three authors. Moreover, it will be shown that: 1) there are some similarities in John Paul's and Adrienne's theological anthropology and 2) that von Balthasar employs some of Adrienne's insights in his theology.

⁴¹Among others, the following themes will be considered: creation, the sacrament of marriage, the man-woman relationship, the Christ-Church relationship, the bodiliness of Christ, matrimonial sacramental life, prayer, marriage as a state of life, Mary as Mother and Bride and the roles in marriage.

Therefore, while Parts II and III will mainly take on the form of an *exposition*, Part IV will take on the form of a *gathering together* of the principal themes and a *dialogue* with other theologians. In the *General Conclusion*, we will be in a position to identify the main characteristics of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage.

For two reasons, it was decided to expose what Adrienne von Speyr writes about marriage within a particular work in Parts II and III, before gathering her insights together from the various writings in Part IV. First, her writings are not systematic. Often, her insights on a particular marriage theme arise in an expected passage, such as a commentary on 1 *Corinthians* 7 or *Ephesians* 5. However, other times her thought on marriage arises in unexpected places. Consequently, frequently the same theme is treated in different works, but in a different light. Treating such and such a theme within its work of origin, enables it to be comprehended within its organic context. Second, because there have been no previous studies on Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, it is good to present them first in their own form, before subjecting them to further scrutiny. This is part of that "attitude of submission" to von Speyr's writings which T.S. Eliot recommends. Certainly, to submit to the writings does not mean to accept them without any critique. Nonetheless, before critiquing them, it is necessary to understand well what exactly the authoress is conveying and how she is communicating it.

Questions of Epistemology and Terminology

A study of Adrienne von Speyr's writings on the sacrament of marriage demands that we address some important questions of epistemology and terminology. Regarding epistemological considerations, keeping in mind that the nature and themes of the writings will be outlined in *Chapter One*, it is vital that it first be explained *how* Adrienne received certain insights. Because Adrienne had little formal theological training, one might be inclined to minimize the significance of her writings. However, if Adrienne was truly given a "theology from above," similar to the experience of St. Thérèse of Liseux, a judgment of her contributions must be based on their inherent value to current theological studies, not on whether or not she obtained a degree in theology or published an article in a theological journal.

Almost all of Adrienne's writings were dictations to von Balthasar. Whether Adrienne would comment on a particular passage from scripture or on another source of meditation, her dictations were not simply inarticulate musings about God's mysteries. Nor were they merely fruit of a personal, subjective experience or psychological observations culled from many years of practice as a medical doctor. Adrienne would dictate to von Balthasar what she had experienced in prayer. In turn, he provided the role of being a "sounding board" for Adrienne. Von Balthasar explained: "My role was mainly to set her free from any self-reflection and to let the whole process be carried out in an atmosphere of trusting obedience to the Church (represented by her confessor)."⁴² Adrienne's insights were tested by von Balthasar's immense theological knowledge. In turn, as will be explained in

⁴²H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag, Bericht und Entwurf* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984) 50-53. Idem, *Our Task, A Report and a Plan* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press and Communio Books, 1994) Transl. J. Saward, 60-63.

more detail in *Chapter One*, Adrienne's insights proved to be significant for the development of von Balthasar's contributions to theology.

As to the nature of Adrienne's writings, von Balthasar described them as a form of "mysticism." However, he was careful to clarify:

The theory of mysticism which Adrienne formulated culminates in the one statement: Mysticism is a particular mission, a particular service to the Church which can only be properly carried out in a continual and complete movement away from oneself, in a self-forgetfulness (she loved the word *effacement*) and virginal readiness for the Word of God. Personal states as such are of no interest and ought not to be reflected upon, all psychologizing introspection becomes without fail a deviation from the main concern--God's Word--and therefore a distortion of one's mission.⁴³

In this way, true mysticism aims to be at the service of Church. It is not so much concerned with the subjective, personal state of the individual mystic; rather its value lies in its ability to deepen the understanding of the fundamental truths of the faith.

Often, Adrienne does not employ conventional theological terminology. For example, she often uses the term "fruitfulness" [*Fruchtbarkeit*] to indicate the gift of God's grace and the grace that is generated by spouses when they participate in God's grace. Thus, Adrienne does not use frequently the terms "sacramental," "habitual" and "actual" grace which are traditional distinctions found in any catechism book on the sacraments. Another example is that Adrienne tends to emphasize the "irrevocability" [*Unwiderruflichkeit*] of marriage rather than to focus on the permanence or the indissolubility of marriage. In other words, while she certainly affirms the permanent objective nature of the sacrament of marriage, she tends to underscore the Christian spouses' irrevocable and faithful commitment to live the sacrament of marriage in complete self-surrender.

Other examples of unique terminology used by Adrienne von Speyr are the terms "readiness" [*Bereitschaft*] and "transparency" [*Durchsichtigkeit*]. Readiness is the fundamental disposition lived by the Son in openness to the Father. Like the Son, the Virgin Mary lives in a spirit of readiness to receive all that her mission as Mother of Jesus might bring: the joys, as well as, the sufferings. Both the Son and the Mother live in transparent readiness before God, an attitude that says: "I have nothing to hide from you; I invite you completely into my life." It is this "confessional" disposition which Christian spouses try to incorporate in their matrimonial life. Further examples of unique terminology used by Adrienne will arise as we progress through the dissertation.

Mainly, it is important to clarify that Adrienne does not use theological language which is typical of catechisms or theological dictionaries. Jacques Servais explains:

Theological language is not, as such, the language of Revelation and faith; grounded, certainly in the latter, it attempts to make intelligible the event of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ through a series of concepts and linguistic expressions which remain ultimately---following the

⁴³H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr* (Einseideln: Johannes Verlag, 1968) 32. Idem, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981) Transl. Antje Lawry and Sr. Sergia Englund, O.C.D., 36.

principle of analogy---inadequate in relation to the mystery under consideration. The language used by Adrienne is 'metaphorical,' not only in virtue of the nature of language in general (cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 21, 1457b), but in the sense that it is specifically the language of Sacred Scripture. One could, of course, call it 'mystical,' but one would risk missing what is in fact its proper character. In the eyes of Balthasar, this woman possessed an extraordinary charism of prophecy in the sense understood by St. Paul and St. Thomas: the gift, received from the Spirit, which consists not only in 'seeing into divine things,' but---and here she differs from other mystics---'knowing how to express them, vast and profound as they are, in terms accessible to all and in a way that serves the Church' ("Adrienne von Speyr and the Sacrament of Confession," in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* [1985] p. 396.)⁴⁴

Thus, Adrienne uses a theological language which invites the reader into the deepest realms of a divine mystery. Accessibility to the mystery is thereby made possible.

At the heart of Adrienne's charism is her ability to unite the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation and to make them accessible and understandable even to one who is not a trained theologian. Furthermore, her writings require a concrete response that goes beyond mere appreciation. In other words, one is invited not only to ponder the mystery, but also to actively to participate in it. While Adrienne's writings are free from the constraints of a particular theological system, it is important to clearly ascertain the meaning of her insights. It will be the task of this work to try to discern precisely what Adrienne is saying within the context of the theology of marriage and family.

Outline of the Dissertation

This work is divided into four parts. *Part I*, which includes *Chapter 1*, is an overview of Adrienne von Speyr's life and works. Before studying her writings it is important to have an understanding of their nature and origin. *Part II*, which includes *Chapters 2* through *5*, is an exposition of the biblical sources of von Speyr's theology of marriage. *Chapter 2* considers marriage in the Old Testament. By studying two commentaries by von Speyr, we will begin to form an understanding of marriage's paradisaical origins and its anticipation of Redemption in Christ. *Chapter 3* studies marriage in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Not only will Dr. von Speyr's commentary on some key marriage passages (such as *Mk* 10, 2-12) be presented, but also some important insights on Jesus's bodiliness. *Chapter 4* is an exposition of Adrienne von Speyr's treatment of marriage themes in the Gospel of John. Her commentary on John's Gospel is central for her entire theological vision, as well as, for her view of Christian marriage. *Chapter 5* treats marriage in the Pauline works. A number of marriage themes are exposed in this chapter: roles in marriage, the Christ-Church relationship and the Virgin Mary.

Part III, which includes *Chapters 6* through *8*, considers marriage in the thematic and posthumous writings of Adrienne von Speyr. *Chapter 6* includes an examination of two works which focus on the irrevocability of marriage. Because marriage is indissoluble, it

⁴⁴Jacques Servais, "A Response from Jacques Servais" in *New Oxford Review*, September 2002, 37.

is to be chosen with careful discernment and lived with courageous magnanimity. *Chapter 7* outlines von Speyr's understanding of prayer and sacramental life in marriage. Moreover, the example of the Holy Family will be presented. *Chapter 8* treats the "theology of the sexes." Created in God's image and redeemed by Christ, man and woman are to imitate Christ and participate in his union with the Church spiritually and bodily.

Part IV, which includes *Chapters 9* and *10*, examines Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage as a whole. *Chapter 9* is an elaboration of the anthropological and dogmatic foundations of marriage. The sacrament of marriage is traced from its paradisaal origins to its founding in Christ and the Church. *Chapter 10* takes into account the spirituality of the spouses and their children. All that makes up marriage and family life is integrated into the spiritual life. In the *General Conclusion*, the main characteristics of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage will be brought into sharper focus.

Part I: The Life and Theological Task of Adrienne von Speyr

Before examining Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, it is important to situate them within the context of her life and theological task as a whole. Since her writings emerge from a unique life experience and her collaborative work with Hans Urs von Balthasar, we will trace the key events and encounters which served as fertile soil for her works. Therefore, important events from Adrienne von Speyr's childhood, family life, adolescence, married and professional life will be highlighted. Moreover, her initial encounter with von Balthasar, subsequent conversion to the Catholic faith and the years of collaboration will be outlined. Finally, the nature and main themes of Adrienne von Speyr's writings will be described.

Chapter One

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Chapter One: The Life and Theological Task of Adrienne von Speyr

1.1 Introduction

Although Adrienne von Speyr was a medical doctor, wife, mother, co-founder of a secular institute, theological writer and mystic, these God-given vocations were all united into one mission. Adrienne knew, especially after her conversion to Catholicism, that any particular gift, ability, charism or insight which was given to her, was to be received and given over to the Church in order to spark further enrichment.¹ In this way, Adrienne's writings are seen as fruit of her whole life and mission. For this reason, in this chapter, an overview of her life, theological task and writings will be given.² Furthermore, important secondary works will be highlighted in order to shed further light on her contributions.

This overview of Adrienne von Speyr's life and mission will proceed in three steps. First, in section 1.2, her important life experiences will be recounted with particular attention to her own family and married life. Second, in section 1.3, an overview of Adrienne's theological task and writings will be offered. Together, her life, theological task and writings form her theological mission. Third, in section 1.4, a brief summary of the secondary studies on Adrienne's work will be presented. In general, over the past fifty or so years, few studies or doctoral dissertations have focused on the von Speyr corpus, but more recently several important contributions have emerged.

In sketching the outlines of Adrienne's life and mission, we will draw from three primary sources. A first primary source, *Aus meinem Leben* [*From My Life*], is an autobiographical account of Adrienne's first twenty-four years of her life. When she was in her forties or fifties, out of obedience to von Balthasar, she wrote of her early family experiences, her youth and medical studies.³ A second primary source is another autobiography called *Geheimnis der Jugend* [*Mystery of Youth*].⁴ By von Balthasar's request, Adrienne was asked to focus on the spiritual pilgrimage of the first thirty-eight years of her life. The book covers her youth, experiences in medical school, medical practice, her married life and reception into the Catholic Church in November 1940. A third

¹Throughout this thesis, for the most part, Adrienne von Speyr will be addressed simply as "Adrienne." This has been the practice of many of those who study her works as well as the usual practice of von Balthasar.

²It is clear that Adrienne's writings "did not just fall out of the sky," as a second reader noted at a recent doctoral defense of a thesis centered on the writings of Adrienne von Speyr. In order to show how Adrienne's writings flow from her life and her charismatic gifts, it is therefore necessary to give a rather detailed introduction to her life. This introduction, which is perhaps longer than usual, also responds to the experiences of this writer over the last few years. Often, someone would ask: "What are you doing your thesis on?" My reply would frequently draw a blank stare. The person had heard the name somewhere, but did not know much about Adrienne von Speyr. At that point, I would often ask my interested inquisitor: "Have you heard of Hans Urs von Balthasar?" With the reply in the affirmative, I would then go on to relate a few details about Adrienne's life and work. This introduction provides a more detailed description.

³Cf. A. von Speyr, *Aus meinem Leben* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984²) Edited and with a Preface by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as *AmL*. Eadem, *My Early Years* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995) Edited and with a Preface by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Transl. Mary Emily Hamilton and Dennis D. Martin. *Aus meinem Leben* is one of the few writings that Adrienne produced in manuscript form.

⁴Cf. A. von Speyr, *Die Nachlasswerke, Band VII, Geheimnis der Jugend* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966) Edited and with an introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as *NB VII*.

primary source is a three volume journal called *Erde und Himmel* [Earth and Heaven].⁵ These *Tagebücher* [diaries] include Adrienne's many spiritual insights and experiences that von Balthasar chronicled throughout the span of their earthly spiritual friendship, from November 1940 to September 1967, when Adrienne died.

In this chapter, we will also draw from two main *biographical* sources which were both authored by von Balthasar.⁶ The first source is *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr* [First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr].⁷ Published a year after Adrienne's death, *Erster Blick* describes what von Balthasar experienced in working together with the Swiss physician for twenty-seven years. The book gives an overview of Adrienne's life and writings and includes a number of prayers and some statements by Adrienne about herself, which, as with the autobiographies and journal entries, were given to von Balthasar out of obedience. In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar gives a "John-like"⁸ testimony to Adrienne's mission: "As her confessor and spiritual father, I observed her interior life most closely. Yet in twenty-seven years, never did the slightest doubts emerge regarding the authenticity of her task, nor about the unpretentious integrity with which she lived it and passed it on to me."⁹ The second biographical source is *Unser Auftrag* [Our Task].¹⁰ Von Balthasar explains in the *Preface* that *Unser Auftrag* was published because Pope John Paul II requested in 1983 that a symposium on Adrienne von Speyr take place in Rome. Because such a symposium required the publication of all of Adrienne's works, von Balthasar desired to provide some necessary explanations and clarifications regarding her writings, especially concerning the previously unreleased *Nachlaßwerke* [posthumous works] which by the express permission of the Holy Father were to be made available to the general public.¹¹ In *Unser Auftrag*, von

⁵Cf. A. von Speyr, *Die Nachlasswerke, Band VIII, Erde und Himmel, Ein Tagebuch, Erster Teil, Einübungen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1975) Edited with an introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as NB VIII. Cf. Eadem, *Die Nachlasswerke, Band IX, Erde und Himmel, Ein Tagebuch, Zweiter Teil, Die Zeit der Grossen Diktate* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1975) Edited with an Introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as NB IX. Cf. Eadem, *Die Nachlasswerke, Band X, Erde und Himmel, Ein Tagebuch, Dritter Teil, Die Späten Jahre* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976) Edited with an Introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as NB X.

⁶Although these two works are not *autobiographical*, but *biographical*, in a sense, they can still be considered primary sources. Since von Balthasar worked so closely with Adrienne, he was rather familiar with her spiritual life.

⁷Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1968) Cf. Idem, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981) Transl. Antje Lawry and Sr. Sergia Englund, O.C.D.

⁸Cf. Jn 21, 24: "This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true."

⁹H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 11. [13].

¹⁰Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag, Bericht und Entwurf* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984). Cf. Idem, *Our Task, A Report and a Plan* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press and Communio Books, 1994) Transl. J. Seward.

¹¹It is clear that John Paul II is familiar with Adrienne's writings. In one place, he refers specifically to one of the *Nachlaßwerke*. Cf. André Frossard, *Portrait of John Paul II*, 73-74. In reply to a question regarding his way of praying, Pope John Paul II reveals that he is currently reading one of the posthumous works, *Das Allerheiligenbuch* [The Book of All Saints]. He notes: "[Adrienne von Speyr] says that in spite of the reputation for energy he acquired as a result of his condemnations of Nazism and communism, Pius XI was really a timid man. I wonder what she would say about the way I pray. It is a very personal subject."

Balthasar provides a valuable account of Adrienne's life, a description of her theology and writings and an overview of their collaboration including a plan for the *Johannesgemeinschaft* [Community of St. John], the secular institute which they co-founded. Throughout the work, von Balthasar strongly underscores the important role that Adrienne's insights played in his own theological development.

Finally, in this chapter, we will also draw occasionally from the book, *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung* [Adrienne von Speyr and Her Ecclesial Mission].¹² This book includes the conferences of the above-mentioned symposium which took place at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome in September 1985. At the symposium, a number of students of Adrienne's writings gave conferences: Godfried Cardinal Danneels, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Angelo Scola, Wilhelm Maas, Georges Chantraine, Marc Ouellet, Joseph Fessio, Antonio Sicari and a member of the women's branch of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*. The book which contains the symposium conferences also includes an address by Pope John Paul II to the participants and articles written by Ludmila Grygiel, Patrick Catry, Jean Léonard, Benedetto Testa and an anonymous author.

1.2 The Life of Adrienne von Speyr

Because of Adrienne's many rich life experiences, her work with von Balthasar and her prolific writings, it is difficult to give a brief overview of her life and theological mission. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this thesis, it is important to touch on Adrienne's experiences of family and married life, her medical practice and conversion to Catholicism. Furthermore, since so much of her work originated out of obedience to and collaboration with her spiritual director, Hans Urs von Balthasar, an overview of the fruit of their common theological task will be presented.

1.2.1 Early Life (1902-1927)

Adrienne was born on September 20, 1902 in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, where her father practiced ophthalmology. The second of four children, she had an older sister, Hélène, and two younger brothers, Wilhelm and Theodor. Adrienne was especially close to her father. Her mother, however, showed her little affection. Despite the fact that the cheerful young girl never ceased to be kind to her mother, it was not until Adrienne later became a medical doctor and married, in succession, two highly distinguished professors that her mother could reluctantly concede that Adrienne had not turned out to be a total failure. Only in the last years of her mother's life did Adrienne succeed in winning her over.¹³

¹²Cf. AA.VV., *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung, Akten des römischen Symposiums, 27-29 September 1985* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1986) Edited by H.U. von Balthasar, Georges Chantraine and Angelo Scola.

¹³Cf. NB IX, 156. [den. 1468]; NB X, 198-200. [den. 2216]. (den.= "diary entry number") Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 16-17. [18-20].

Despite daily scoldings from her mother, Adrienne was not hardened by the experience. Instead, she was bestowed with a God-given childlikeness. As a small child, she had a vision of her guardian angel who revealed to her what to do, what not to do and how to pray. The angel taught her how to simply be in the Lord's presence and to perform sacrificial and penitential acts. Already as a young girl, Adrienne practiced voluntary penance but not in an exaggerated or disordered way. Later, after her conversion, von Balthasar recounts that as her spiritual director he would have to place limits on her penitential practices so that she did not "go overboard" in her love for God, the Church and its needs and in her zeal to make sacrifices for sinners.¹⁴

Although Adrienne's mother did not foster a close bond with her young daughter, Adrienne did enjoy a particularly loving relationship with her grandmother. Adrienne fondly recalls how she would like to pass hours at her grandmother's house. It was at "Les Tilleuls" where she first learned about silence and recollection. Her grandmother would allow her to spend hours by the window watching the gently falling snow. Other times she would teach Adrienne how to knit or she would play the piano and they would sing together. A religious woman, Adrienne's grandmother would visit the sick and give homemade jam and other things to the poor. She told Adrienne stories about heaven, but also recounted fairy tales and other children's stories. Unfortunately, when Adrienne was only eleven years old, her grandmother died.¹⁵

Already as a young girl, Adrienne aspired to be a medical doctor. Towards this end, during her teenage years, her father allowed her to attend secondary school (*Gymnasium*). She enjoyed her studies greatly, but after two years her mother compelled her to attend a "middle school for young women" (*Obere Mädchenschule*) which did not provide preparatory classes for studies in medicine. However after a year, Adrienne's father allowed her to return to *Gymnasium*. Adrienne's childhood which was made difficult by intermittent illness and her mother's lack of affection, suffered another blow when her father died in February 1917. Not only did Adrienne lose her father who was a good friend and someone she admired, but she now felt responsible for taking care of the family and the household in addition to completing her schoolwork. Moreover, her mother requested that she attend a business school as well as *Gymnasium*. Adrienne worked so hard that in the summer of 1918, at sixteen years of age, she physically collapsed. Diagnosed with tuberculosis, she was told by the doctor that she would die within six months.¹⁶

After three years of treatment in several different clinics, during which time Adrienne's mother visited her very infrequently, Adrienne recuperated completely and was able to return to school. However, because of her mother's opposition to the idea of studying medicine, Adrienne had to pay her own way through medical school. Despite her many trials, she always remained a joyful, vivacious and good-humored young woman who was well-liked by her classmates and made friends easily.¹⁷

¹⁴Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 17. [19].

¹⁵Cf. *AmL*, 15-18.339-357. [19-23.405-427].

¹⁶Cf. *AmL*, 47-50.143-154. [56-60.167-181]. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 19-20. [22-24].

¹⁷Cf. *NB VII*, 137. Speaking of her experience during *Gymnasium*, Adrienne noted: "I [had] a ton of boyfriends, I could [have married] a different one each week if I wanted to!" Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 21-22. [24-26]; Idem, *Unser Auftrag*, 27-28. [32].

During her early life, Adrienne had two important mystical experiences. The first occurred when she was six years old. On a snowy Christmas Eve, she had a mysterious encounter with an old, impoverished man while walking up a street of La Chaux-de-Faux. The man invited Adrienne to come with him, but somewhat frightened she declined, wished him "Merry Christmas" and went on her way. Only much later, in one of her visions, did Adrienne recognize the man as St. Ignatius of Loyola.¹⁸ The second mystical experience occurred when she was fifteen. She had a vision of the Mother of God and received a small wound, which never closed, below her left breast over her heart. Although she did not reflect on the mysterious wound at great length, she knew that the wound was a sign of her belonging bodily to God.¹⁹

Raised in the Reformed Church of Switzerland, Adrienne became aware that two things in particular were lacking in her Protestant faith: a mother and sacramental confession. On the one hand, the vision of Mary began to open a way of understanding for Adrienne which, after her conversion, would bloom into an intimate spiritual union with the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, throughout her early life, Adrienne felt a desperate yearning to confess her sins. Again and again, in different ways, she not only longed to confess her own sins, but also she saw how those around her needed to confess, especially those who would come to her for medical assistance. However, the Protestant Church could not offer fulfillment of her desire. Finally, with her conversion at the age of thirty-eight, Adrienne was able to quench her thirst for sacramental confession.²⁰

1.2.2 Marriage to Emil Dürr (1927-1934)

Having received a monetary gift from her cousin, Adrienne went on vacation for the first time in July 1927. It was during this vacation in San Bernardino in southeastern Switzerland that she met Emil Dürr, widower, father of two sons and a university history professor. It was not long before Professor Dürr fell in love with Adrienne and asked her to marry him. Because of the mysterious wound over Adrienne's heart and her understanding that it signified her complete bodily belonging to God, the idea of marriage did not at first bring consolation to her.²¹ Von Balthasar writes: "It was clear to her from the beginning that she was to belong completely to God and yet the choice between marriage and virginity was not really available to her."²²

As a Protestant, Adrienne did not see any other path open to her besides marriage. Later, she would recount her understanding of marriage at the time that she was becoming acquainted with Dürr: "For each woman, there must be an absolute purpose. And basically

¹⁸Cf. *AmL*, 25-26. [32-33].

¹⁹Cf. *AmL*, 142-143. [166-167]; *NB VII*, 45; *NB IX*, 244-247. [den. 1645]. Cf. H.U. Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 25. [28-29]; Idem, *Unser Auftrag*, 20. [23-24].

²⁰Cf. *NB VII*, 18.36.42.130.188.201.250.264.266. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 20-23. [24-27]. Cf. William Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a 'Sequela Christi' in the Writings of A. von Speyr* (Rome: Doctorate Thesis, John Paul II Institute, Pontifical Lateran University, 1999), 45-62. Schmitt carefully and comprehensively traces the theme of confession throughout Adrienne's life from her yearning for the sacrament as a child to her maturing understanding of its theology as a converted Catholic.

²¹Cf. *NB VII*, 205-227. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 25. [29].

²²H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 25. [29].

I [could] not picture anything else besides marriage---or at least nothing else that would [have been] realizable other than marriage. [...] There is not a third way.”²³ Adrienne would later describe her predicament in the present tense to von Balthasar:

Deep down I don't have the feeling that I am doing what God wants. And yet I would be doing God's will even less if I were *not* to marry. If I were completely immersed in the will of God, n y body would also be wholly in God's will. So there's something in me that resists. And at the same time, I know that it would be unkind if I were to show this resistance to Emil.²⁴

Despite her misgivings, Adrienne accepted Dr. Dürr's proposal of marriage out of sympathy for him and compassion for his two children. They were married in September 1927.²⁵

Although the first years of their marriage were marked by Adrienne's unresolved questions regarding her faith, she grew to love Emil Dürr very much. The turning point came when it became clear to Adrienne that her faith in God was of concern to her husband. Even though he had been far from the faith until that point, it became clear that Emil Dürr now believed in God and Redemption. Adrienne loved Dürr for his goodness and loving support. Twenty years older than his wife, Emil Dürr understood her well and was thankful for giving herself to him. Together with Adrienne, he felt inclined towards converting to Catholicism; indeed, both seriously considered the prospect. They discussed God's love, Catholicism, the Church, the hierarchy and confession. On vacation, they would pray together in Catholic churches. In short, they lived a joyful life together.²⁶

However, Adrienne and Emil Dürr's marriage was not entirely without its hardships. During the marriage, Adrienne suffered three miscarriages. Each occurred while she was attending to a patient and each brought its own sorrow.²⁷ However, although

²³ Cf. *NB VII*, 222. When Adrienne notes, “There is not a third way,” she is referring to the states of life. Even before her conversion, she felt that there existed only two states of life: marriage and the consecrated life. As a Protestant, the consecrated life would not have been open to her.

²⁴ Cf. *NB VII*, 233: “Und weil ich im Grunde nicht das Gefühl habe, zu tun, was Gott will. Und doch täte ich noch weniger, was Gott will, wenn ich jetzt nicht heiraten würde. Wäre ich ganz im Willen Gottes, so wäre auch mein Leib ganz im Willen Gottes. So aber sträubt sich etwas in mir. Und dabei weiß ich, daß es ungenerös wäre, wenn ich dem Emil dieses Sträuben zeigen würde.”

²⁵ Cf. *NB VII*, 228-241. Later, Adrienne was able to understand her initial misgivings over marriage in the light of God's will. She explained it this way: “Daß man für den Lieben Gott geschaffen ist in erster Linie, und erst nachher für die Menschen. Und daß man geschaffen ist für das, was *Gott* will und nicht für das, was *ich* will. Das verstehe ich unter Reinheit. Das Körperliche fällt irgendwie auch hinein.” (*NB VII*, 241) Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, [25]. 29.

²⁶ Cf. *NB VII*, 286-290. Describing taking leave of Emil before Adrienne went to her medical practice, she recounts: “Als ich aufstand, um in die Praxis zu gehen, stand auch er auf, gab mir einen Abschiedskuß und sagte: er freue sich sehr, bis es wieder Abend sei und wir wieder zusammen seien. Das sei doch so schön in unserem Leben, daß man sich immer wieder freuen dürfe, nur freuen.” (*NB VII*, 290) Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 142-144. [159-162].

²⁷ Cf. *NB IX*, 249-250. [den. 1650]. With the help of Adrienne's narration of her experience of the miscarriages, von Balthasar writes: “Das erste Mal hätte sie sich shonen, hat aber trotzdem einer schwerkranken Frau, die am Gebären war, von ihrem Blut abgegeben, und sie wenigstens äußerlich um den Preis ihrer eigenen Schwangerschaft gerettet. Das zweite Mal mußte sie eine große Bergtour machen, um einen Bauern zu besuchen; sie fühlte, daß es zuviel war, und hat es trotzdem getan. Das dritte Mal, im Jahr 1931, geschah es bei der Lungenentzündung; sie hatte sich angesteckt, als sie eine ganze Nacht bei einem Mann wachte, der am Ersticken war, und der nur, solange sie bei ihm war, ruhig war und atmete. Die zwei letzten Vorkommnisse

Adrienne was not gifted with her own natural children, it must be underscored that Adrienne's married life bore much fruit in other ways. Above all, her experiences of married life helped enrich her medical practice and gave her insights into human sexuality. Von Balthasar elaborates: "The experience of marriage [...] was of benefit not only for her profession but also for providing profound insights into the 'theology of the sexes' (grounded in the Christ/Church relationship) and, in general, into bodiliness and its positive value within the 'religion of the Incarnation' [i.e. Christianity]." ²⁸ Quite suddenly, Emil and Adrienne's peaceful and loving marriage was dealt a harsh and fatal blow when Professor Dürr died on February 12, 1934. His death proved very difficult for Adrienne to accept. She grieved intensely and at one point even considered suicide. ²⁹

1.2.3 Medical Practice (1931-1954)

From its opening in 1931, Adrienne's medical practice in Basel was flooded with patients. Von Balthasar describes her practice which was a medical, as well as, pastoral service to the men and women of Basel:

She saw up to sixty and eighty patients in a day. However, each one was satisfied. The whole human situation was always brought into consideration: family circumstances, the moral outlook on life and the religious dimension when present. Marriages were healed and abortions were prevented (by the thousands, Adrienne once said). Unwed mothers and their children were cared for. Poor people, which made up the majority, were given free treatment. ³⁰

Adrienne continued her practice until 1954, when she was forced to close it due to her own poor health and failing eyesight. She had become so closely bound to her practice that she had to tear herself away from it. Serving others as a physician had not only brought much consolation and joy to Adrienne, but also it gave her tangible assurance that she was doing some good in the world. ³¹

weiß sie nicht mehr. Vom ersten aber weiß sie noch gut, daß es ein Opfer war: entweder das eigene Kind oder das der andern."

²⁸H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 25-26. [29-31].

²⁹Cf. *NB VII*, 290-295. In a tragic accident, Dürr was thrown from an electric street car which was rounding a curve. He died within two days of the accident. Adrienne describes her prayer in the brief time between Emil's accident and his death and her desolation upon hearing of his passing away: "Es war gräßlich, an alle die Vater Unser zu denken, die man in den letzten Tagen gebetet hatte, und die alle falsch waren...Imgrunde hatte ich halt doch gedacht: *mein* Wille geschehe. Ich dachte ernstlich daran, daß ich mich umbringen müsse. Alles aufräumen und dann gehen. Ich konnte nichts mehr klar sehen." (*NB VII*, 292) Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 25-26. [29-30].

³⁰H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 28. [32].

³¹Cf. *NB VIII*, 221-222. [den. 402]. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 9-10. [11-12]. In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar describes the indifferent reaction to Adrienne's writings before and immediately after her death and how Adrienne understood the situation: "Although at the time of Adrienne's death thirty-seven of her books were in print (thirty-four of which were available in bookstores), up to this point, no one has taken serious notice of her writings. No newspaper besides the *Vaterland* of Lucerne deemed her worthy of even a brief obituary notice. The infrequent reviews of her books were mostly drab; nobody was willing to compromise himself. At the beginning, this attitude surprised Adrienne some because she had always been aware of having a mission in the Church. Gradually she came to understand that during her lifetime it was her

To Adrienne, her medical practice was much more than a mere profession. Because of numerous sufferings during her life, both physical and spiritual, she had much compassion (“com-passion” = “suffer-with”) for those who came to her for help. At the same time, she was able to diagnose and counsel objectively. Von Balthasar explains:

What she strived for was a most possible complete reciprocal penetration of professional ability and fellowship [*Mit mensch-lichkeit*]; through technical competence she wanted to be for her patients a person upon whom they could lay complete trust. Through her closeness to them, they could unburden their needs and worries and they might obtain for themselves helpful advice in difficult situations. Already she endeavored to be especially present and to accompany her patients to the point of bearing unavoidable suffering which could end in death.³²

In hours of consultation with patients, Adrienne saw easily through pretense and exaggeration, yet when physical and spiritual pain was really serious, she responded with complete gravity.

Furthermore, the mystery of the sacrament of confession was central for Adrienne in her medical work as she perceived many connections between the physical unveiling of the medical examination and the spiritual unveiling which occurs in confession. She was convinced that objectivity and soberness in selfless love form the common atmosphere for both.³³ Adrienne saw how she bore responsibility not only towards the patient, but also before God and understood that both responsibilities were to be united in her profession. Adrienne explains:

Also, it seemed to me that since we were often placed in the situation of hearing avowals and admissions of guilt from the patients, and since we came into contact through them with all the problems of guilt, we ourselves ought to be able to give over our respective sins. Indeed, now and then, I did this before God, but it wasn't enough for me anymore. I began to yearn ardently for sacramental confession, from which I expected to receive not only a purifying effect in and for me, but also, and this more than anything, a deep-seated effect on my human interaction with the patients, so that the distinction between the 'mine' and 'thine' of guilt and innocence would no longer be very acute or perhaps not even at all distinguishable.³⁴

In this remarkable quotation, several points emerge regarding Adrienne's attitude towards her medical practice. First, as noted above, it is evident that being a doctor was not just a profession for Adrienne, but a vocation. She lived it as a service to God, men and women. Second, she had a keen awareness, even before her conversion to Catholicism, how

lot to have to speak and work in emptiness.” In other words, she gave her meditations and insights over to von Balthasar without any evident effect. In contrast, Adrienne would have seen more results and effects in the good that she effected through her medical profession. For this reason, it would have been difficult to have to permanently retire from the practice of medicine.

³²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Adrienne von Speyr als Ärztin* in *Missionskalender* (St. Ottilien), 1972, 58.

³³Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Adrienne von Speyr als Ärztin*, 60.

³⁴*AmL*, 305. [365]. Cf. W. Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a 'Sequela Christi' in the Writings of A. von Speyr*, 50-55.

sacramental grace in general, and the grace of the sacrament of confession in particular, could positively affect not only her own person, but also how it could be of assistance for her work. Third, and this is most interesting for our study of Adrienne's writings on the sacrament of confession in marriage, it is noteworthy how she desired that her innocence or guilt almost not be distinguished from that of her patients. Clearly, she was not only concerned about the welfare of her patients' bodies, but also she felt responsible for their souls. She wanted to be in solidarity with those whom she served.³⁵ Furthermore, as will be shown in *Chapters 7 and 10*, Adrienne understands that often the guilt of the spouses is so closely intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish between the sins of one or the other. In other words, often they are mutually responsible for their sins. It seems that Adrienne perceived a similar solidarity in her relationship with her patients. The above citation shows how not only did Adrienne's own experience of married life provide her with insights into the realm of the theology of marriage, but also how her practice of medicine served as fertile soil for deeper penetration into the "theology of the sexes."

1.2.4 Marriage to Werner Kaegi (1936-1967)

In the summer of 1934, several months after Emil Dürr's death, Werner Kaegi, an assistant professor under Dürr at the University of Basel, began to visit Adrienne's house about once a week to tutor Dürr's two sons. On these occasions, he would also visit with Adrienne. Adrienne and Kaegi had a number of common interests and entered into conversation easily with each other. Still distraught over Dürr's death, Adrienne was finding it extremely difficult to pray. Indeed, she even questioned her belief in God. However, she found some consolation in her growing friendship with Kaegi as she recounts:

I spent some pleasant evenings with him. We spoke over a thousand things and it was noteworthy that he believed in God: absolutely and without question. And I myself, since Emil's death, didn't really know whether or not I believed in God. I could no longer pray the Our Father. Everything was so empty inside. I just could not pray. It touched me that [Werner] believed in God, even though he didn't belong to any particular denomination. [...] He would say much about God, but I could answer very little because I just didn't know anymore.³⁶

Not much time passed before Kaegi became quite fond of Adrienne. Catching her by surprise one evening, he expressed his love for her.³⁷

Before that evening, the thought of re-marrying had not even crossed Adrienne's mind. She would later recount: "I had this quite impersonal feeling: he needs a wife. And he wants to do the right thing, but he's so insecure in life. It didn't cross my mind that he

³⁵Of course, Adrienne's desire to be in solidarity with her patients has to be understood within the proper context. It does not mean that if they were guilty of something, she felt she would have to sin to be united to them. Instead, her desire could be considered to be more specifically Christ-like. Like Christ, who although sinless took on the suffering of our sins, Adrienne desired to be in solidarity with her patients and yet hoped that somehow their sins could be taken away.

³⁶NB VII, 297.

³⁷Cf. NB VII, 298.

needed *me* as his wife.”³⁸ However, now that Kaegi had made it clear that he loved her and would like to marry her, she became aware of her ambiguous feelings over the prospect. On the one hand, Adrienne had misgivings about the idea of re-marrying in general. On the other hand, she could see that it would be good for her two step-children to have a father figure in their lives.³⁹ Not long after Kaegi declared his fondness for Adrienne, she agreed to marry him. On September 10, 1934, Adrienne and Werner Kaegi were engaged. However, because Adrienne did not want to re-marry until at least two years after Dürr’s death, they decided they would not marry until February 1936.

The time of engagement was not a period of great peace for Adrienne. First of all, occasionally, she questioned whether she should re-marry at all and she oscillated over her decision to marry Werner Kaegi in particular.⁴⁰ Second, she yearned to pray peacefully again. Ever since Emil Dürr died in 1934, she was unable to pray with complete sincerity the words from the Our Father, “thy will be done.” Although she had accepted Dürr’s death, in retrospect she came to believe that she had not really given herself over to God in complete freedom. Consequently, in her honesty, she felt compelled to cease praying the Lord’s Prayer. At one point, Adrienne sought the counsel of a Protestant minister. He suggested that she substitute other prayers in place of the Our Father, but she still could not pray that God’s “will be done.”⁴¹

In any event, the marriage went ahead as planned; Adrienne and Werner Kaegi were married on February 29, 1936. Although they were fond of each other, they did not have an entirely easy relationship. They remained mutually supportive, faithful and devoted to each other unto death. Adrienne would die in 1967; Werner Kaegi in 1979. Von Balthasar was particularly grateful to Professor Kaegi for allowing him to reside in the first floor of their house so that he could continue to work closely with Adrienne.⁴²

³⁸NB VII, 297; NB VII, 298-299. Adrienne recounts that she did not marry out of loneliness: “Ich habe natürlich nicht aus Einsamkeit geheiratet, sicher nicht. Er hat eine Frau gebraucht. Und wenn er mich schon liebt, warum soll er mich nicht bekommen? Und dann sind die Kinder da, und er mag sie gern.”

³⁹Cf. NB VII, 300.

⁴⁰Cf. NB VII, 305.

⁴¹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 26-27. [30-31].

⁴²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 25-26, n. 38. [29-30, n. 38]: “Ohne die Gastfreundschaft Werner Kaegis aber wäre meine Arbeit mit A. und später mein Wohnen auf dem Münsterplatz niemals möglich geworden.” Cf. Idem, *Erster Blick*, 9. [11]. Von Balthasar lived on the groundfloor of the Kaegi-Speyr house for fifteen years. Adrienne and Werner Kaegi lived upstairs. Both von Balthasar and Adrienne are discreet regarding Adrienne’s second marriage. Von Balthasar only notes that it was “not entirely easy.” Cf. Idem, *Unser Auftrag*, 25-26, n. 38. [29-30, n. 38]: “Die Verbindung wird trotz echter Zuneigung nicht ganz leicht sein.” Cf. NB VII, 301. It seems that Kaegi was prone to mood swings. Even before their marriage, Adrienne was aware of these personality traits. Nonetheless, she remained steady in her promise to marry him: “Dann machte Werner mir seine erste Szene...” Cf. NB VII, 305: “Dann der Winter, und die Frage, ob die Charaktere sich vertragen können. Werner ist sehr oft unglücklich. Er hat seine Reibungen`meist, wenn er allein ist, hat sich in seiner Pension schrecklich `aufgegeben` wegen dem Lärm und dem übrigen, was ihm gegen den Strich geht. Er ist erbittert, weil er die Nähmaschine hört usw. Und ich hatte das Gefühl: weiß der Kuckuck was das alles für Schwierigkeiten geben wird. Aber man bleibt halt einfach innerhalb seines Beschlusses.”

1.2.5 Conversion to Catholicism (1940) and Subsequent Spiritual Graces

Although Adrienne had been moving towards conversion to Catholicism her whole life, one hurdle remained. As noted above, since her first husband's death in 1934, she was unable to pray the Our Father. In the fall of 1940, it was arranged that Adrienne would meet Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar who was a university chaplain at the time. Adrienne summoned the courage to tell him about her yearning to become Catholic and soon they were discussing prayer. Von Balthasar explained to Adrienne that "thy will be done" does not mean that we offer to God what we can do by ourselves, but that we offer the Lord our willingness to allow him take over our lives and move us anywhere it may please him. With von Balthasar's explanation, Adrienne understood immediately as if a light had suddenly been switched on and illuminated all the darkness of her years of searching. Von Balthasar recounts: "Adrienne was freed from the binding chains of all hindrances and her prayer began to carry her along as if she were riding on the waters of a restless river. In the instructions she understood everything immediately, as if she had only waited---and for how long!---to hear exactly what I was saying in order that she could consent to it."⁴³ On the Feast of All Saints in 1940, she was received into the Church.

Adrienne's conversion brought many graces of prayer, vision and healing. Above all, she was granted graces in prayer. She would be moved beyond vocal prayer or self-directed meditation on God and placed somewhere else, spiritually speaking, with a new understanding of a divine mystery. She was bestowed with a close spiritual relationship with the Virgin Mary and St. Ignatius of Loyola. Furthermore, sometimes while attending Mass she would be granted a vision of the Church filled with the angels and saints who were praying along with her. Adrienne was given insight into the prayer lives of certain saints such that she was led to understand better the union between the communion of saints in heaven and the faithful who strive towards sainthood on earth. The most difficult, but perhaps the most fruitful, spiritual gift bestowed upon Adrienne was interior participation each Holy Week in the Passion of Christ. This experience culminated in an experience of the descent into hell. Von Balthasar would later call Adrienne's "theology of Holy Saturday" her most important theological contribution to the Church. Moreover, graces of healing were given to Adrienne, especially in her contact with the sick.⁴⁴

Adrienne was also granted special graces to interpret Sacred Scripture. At von Balthasar's request, she would consider a scriptural passage for a few moments and then begin to dictate to him quietly and objectively. Normally, she would dictate for approximately twenty minutes or a half hour interpreting one verse at a time, one after the other.⁴⁵ For example, her "meditation points" on the *Gospel of Mark* were given over a two

⁴³H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 27, [30-31].

⁴⁴Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 29-32.56-59. [33-37.64-68]. Adrienne's spiritual experiences of Christ's Passion and descent into hell humbled her: "Für Adrienne war das Ganze ein Anlaß von tiefer Angst [...] noch mehr ein Anlaß von Verdemütigung und Schande: daß das ihr, der Sünderin, Zugestoßene irgendetwas mit dem Leiden des Herrn zu tun haben könnte." (*Erster Blick*, 31. [35].) Cf. John Saward, "From a Terrace on the Rhine" in *30 Days* (November 1990), 77.

⁴⁵Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 32. [36-37].

and a half year period during which most days she would interpret a single verse.⁴⁶ From the very beginning of the outpouring of graces triggered by her conversion, Adrienne viewed herself simply as an instrument through which God might somehow bring new fruitfulness to the Church.

1.2.6 The Middle and Later Years (1940-1967)

The last twenty-seven years of Adrienne's life were filled with much spiritual fruitfulness, in the form of the writings she produced, her work with von Balthasar and the founding of a community.⁴⁷ However, Adrienne also endured much personal suffering. Physically, she suffered from a weak heart, diabetes, arthritis and loss of sight. She loved to read novels, embroider and knit but had to gradually curtail these activities and finally cease them completely as her health grew worse. During this last stage of her life, Adrienne was drawn ever deeper into prayer and physical and spiritual suffering. Although the 1940's would be the most fruitful time of "the great dictations," by the early 1950's Adrienne would be so tired that von Balthasar would rarely ask her for dictations.⁴⁸

By 1953, the number of Adrienne's works had grown to sixty volumes and von Balthasar had an immense amount of stenographic material to prepare for publishing. Moreover, it seemed to him that a limit had been reached of how much one could possibly read. Adrienne was somewhat disappointed in von Balthasar's "restriction" on her, as he writes: "For Adrienne, who was penetrating deeper and deeper into divine truths, this restriction which I imposed on her was inhibiting, indeed, disappointing. Her spiritual productivity was boundless: we could just as well have two or three times as many texts of hers today."⁴⁹

Despite her many sufferings, Adrienne remained a joyful, courageous, childlike, and giving person. Von Balthasar lists four main aspects of her character. First, Adrienne had a true *joyousness* about her. She loved surprises, was cheerful, unpretentious, humorous and high-spirited. More than anything, her joyful disposition was an expression of joy in God. Second, Adrienne was exceptionally *courageous*. She lived this God-given courage not only in her relationships with other men and women, but also with God. Through her initial and continual giving-over of herself to the Lord, she allowed him to lead her not only to the

⁴⁶Von Balthasar was only present for the first few dictations of the *Markus* meditations. The early members of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* were the main recipients and stenographers of these. No doubt, other meditations on Scripture were given similarly, that is, where only the community members were present.

⁴⁷Adrienne's work and writings are addressed in detail in the next section.

⁴⁸Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 33-39. [37-44]. Cf. Justin Matro, *Christian Suffering in the Spiritual Writings of Adrienne von Speyr* (Rome: Doctoral Dissertation, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1999)19. Matro describes Adrienne's spirit of availability to suffering, a spirit which was fertile ground from which her insights and writings came forth: "What needs to be underscored is precisely this disposition of availability to God's will. Indeed, herein lies the hallmark of von Speyr's comprehension of the mysteriously fecund phenomena of Christian Suffering. Here the Christian remains receptively available towards an existential mystery: some form of suffering which is beyond the reach of human manipulation or comprehension. This openness, which came to characterize von Speyr's life, resides at the heart of her spiritual writings. Indeed, von Speyr dedicated her life to exploring the depths of this mystery and, with the help of Balthasar, made the fruits of these insights available to others."

⁴⁹H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 39. [44].

Cross, but also to hell. On the one hand, her experiences of Christ's Passion did not break her courageous spirit. On the other hand, she was never reckless. Living in obedience to God and her confessor, she allowed her courage to be formed in Christ. Third, Adrienne had a distinct *childlikeness* about her. She cultivated childhood memories which she would share with her brothers and sister. Before God, the Church and her confessor, she was without guile, trustful and transparent. However, she could still be stern when necessary. Von Balthasar notes: "This [childlikeness] did not create an obstacle to her being a mature, bright, motherly woman, unsparing when it came to making necessary demands and creating order, with traits which could almost be called manly (and which Teresa of Avila also showed to her [spiritual] daughters)." ⁵⁰ Fourth, Adrienne was a very *generous* person. Already as a little girl, she would give alms without worrying whether or not she needed the money. Above all, she would prefer to give anonymously and took delight in imagining the joy of the surprised and perplexed recipients. Adrienne made certain that this spirit of poverty be fostered in her community. Moreover, she wrote letters to ask for money on behalf of others. ⁵¹

From the mid-fifties on, Adrienne grew weaker and weaker on account of her physical ailments and spiritual suffering. Although her doctors expected her to die any time, she continued to persevere. Undoubtedly, through her suffering and the spiritual demands which were made on her, much spiritual fruitfulness was brought forth. After a prolonged period of time during which her health slowly deteriorated, a situation which Adrienne accepted with her ever vibrant spirit of disponibility to God's will, she died on September 17, 1967, the feast of Hildegard of Bingen, a saint to whom Adrienne felt closely connected

⁵⁰H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 41-43. [47-49]. Cf. Jean Léonard, "Geschmeidigkeit und Humor" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 40-46. Describing Adrienne's disposition, Léonard underlines the unity between her *malleability* and her *precision*. He writes: "Der Geist der Geschmeidigkeit eint sich bei ihr mit der forderndsten Genauigkeit." (p. 43) Of Adrienne's joyful disposition, he writes: "So nimmt der Humor Adriennes in der göttlichen Freude den Menschen und die durch Christi Leiden versöhnte Welt in sich hinein." (p. 45) Cf. Ein Mitglied, "Kurze Darstellung der Johannesgemeinschaft" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 55: "[Adriennes] Humor war für sie charakteristisch und sehr oft heilsam. Von einem überdurchschnittlich intelligenten Mitglied sagte sie einmal: 'Ich hätte Lust, sie mit Neckern zu erziehen.'"

⁵¹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 36-37. [41-42]. Cf. Ein Jesuit, "Arm um zu Bereichern" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 36-39. This anonymous author underscores and exemplifies how Adrienne lived poverty, concretely and spiritually, throughout her whole life. Already as a little girl, she must have learned the virtue of Christian poverty and selfless giving from her grandmother. Adrienne's experience of poverty was authentically concrete: "Tiefer betrachtet wollte Adrienne die Armut konkret erfahren. Von jeher war sie gewohnt, zu geben ohne zu zählen." (p. 37) "Diese gelebte Armut [...] ist somit bei ihr Ausdruck einer geistigen Armut, eines Willens, sich aller Güter zu entledigen oder, wo sie diesem Wunsch äußerlich nicht entsprechen konnte, im Geist vollkommener Entäußerung zu leben." (p. 38) However, Adrienne's lived poverty did not keep her from appreciating God's beauty evident in his creation and creatures: "Dieser Geist der Armut hinderte sie im übrigen durchaus nicht, bei gewissen Gelegenheiten die Wohltaten der Schöpfung zu genießen. Keinerlei Spur bei ihr von einer desinkarnierten Loslösung von allem Irdischen wie bei orientalischen Weisen. Sie betrachtet und liebt Gott in seinen guten Werken." (p. 38) Adrienne also had a detachment to her God-given skills and capabilities. She would forgo using them for the greater glory of God. For example, she had to give up playing piano in order to give more time to her medical studies and caring for her family. (p. 39)

by way of spiritual friendship, profession and mystical experience.⁵²

1.3 The Theological Task and Work of Adrienne von Speyr

The theological task and work of Adrienne von Speyr is fruit of her whole life experience: her early family and later married life, her long journey towards conversion to the Catholic Church, her medical practice, her profound life of prayer, her collaboration with Hans Urs von Balthasar and her intense sufferings. Above all, Adrienne's theological task and work were united into one mission, the fruit of which is seen in her work with von Balthasar, the founding of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* [Community of St. John], her theology, charisms and her writings. Each of these will now be considered more closely.

1.3.1 The Common Task: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar

Certainly, one cannot describe the work of Adrienne von Speyr without discussing the important role which Hans Urs von Balthasar played in her conversion and spiritual growth and in making known her life and writings. Ever since Adrienne's conversion in 1940, the two would remain united in a common task. For his part, von Balthasar tirelessly made himself available to Adrienne as a spiritual father, stenographer, recorder of her spiritual experiences and insights, and editor and publisher of her works. Von Balthasar described his role in this way:

Adrienne is a world. Not only has she built a world community, but built it upon an extensive theology, which in its substance derives from her. All I attempted to do was gather it up and embed it in a space, such as the theology of the Fathers, that of the Middle Ages and the modern age, with which I was fairly familiar. My contribution consisted in providing a comprehensive theological horizon, so that all that was new and valid in her thought would not be watered down or falsified, but be given space to unfold. With a mere textbook-theology one could not have captured Adrienne's work; it required a knowledge of the great tradition to realize that her original propositions in no way contradicted it.⁵³

For her part, Adrienne provided von Balthasar with important insights which enriched his theological vision immensely. Von Balthasar states clearly that Adrienne's main theological themes and insights could not be found in his writings before 1940. After 1940 many of her theological contributions emerged in his lectures, articles and books precisely because he learned them from Adrienne.⁵⁴

⁵²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 43-47. Von Balthasar describes Adrienne's agonizingly slow death: "Es war ein unfäglich langsames Diminuendo, das immer noch leiser und leiser wurde. Ein Sterben unter der langsamsten aller Zeitlupen." Cf. A. von Speyr, *Die Nachlasswerke, Vol. I/1, Das Allerheiligenbuch I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966), 73-78.283-284. Edited with an Introduction by H.U. von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as *NB I/1*.

⁵³Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Test Everything, Hold Fast to What is Good, An Interview with Hans Urs von Balthasar* by Angelo Scola (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), transl. Mary Shradly, 88.

⁵⁴Adrienne and von Balthasar met for the first time in 1940. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 61-63. [73-74]; Idem, *Erster Blick*, 11. [13]. Von Balthasar writes of Adrienne's influence on his work: "[Sie] gab mir oft Hinweise für Predigten, Vorträge usw., las aber nur selten—und mit fortschreitender Erblindung immer weniger—meine Bücher. Im ganzen habe ich theologisch mehr von ihr erhalten als sie von mir, obwohl

A number of writers differ on their opinions regarding how much impact Adrienne's thought had on von Balthasar's work. Some are perplexed over his insistence that she contributed major insights to his own vision.⁵⁵ Other writers would rather separate Adrienne's work completely from his.⁵⁶ Still others, like von Balthasar himself, understand their united theological task as a work of two complementary charismatic visions which breathes new life into the Church, much like the contributions of Saints Theresa of Avila and John of Cross and Saints Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal, not to mention the Virgin Mary and John the Apostle. Joseph Ratzinger explains that all fruitful theology must be enlivened by the burning inspiration of a "prophet." In illustrating this, he draws a comparison between the works of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Dominic, Bonaventure, Francis and others and the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr:

I believe Balthasar emphasized once that behind the great theologians, there is always somewhere, in the first place, a prophet. Augustine is inconceivable without the monastic movement, especially Anthony; also Athanasius depends on it. Again, Thomas Aquinas is unthinkable without Dominic, without the preceding charism of evangelization that bursts forth in his work [...] One could say the same about Bonaventure and Francis of Assisi, and that is exactly how it is with Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hans Urs von Balthasar is inconceivable without Adrienne von Speyr.⁵⁷

das genaue Verhältnis nicht aufgerechnet werden kann." Cf. Johan Roten, "The two halves of the moon: Marian anthropological dimensions in the common mission of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 16 (Fall, 1989) 433-435. Roten lists twelve themes, in addition to the Marian ones, which indicate Adrienne von Speyr's direct influence on von Balthasar's work.

⁵⁵Cf. Richard J. Neuhaus, "While We're At It" in *First Things* (April 1998), 67. Neuhaus writes: "Like many students of Hans Urs von Balthasar, I have never been able to quite understand his devotion to the thought of Adrienne von Speyr, a friend and a mystic to whom he declared himself so greatly indebted."

⁵⁶Cf. Werner Löser, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner" in *America, A Jesuit Magazine* (Vol. 181, No. 11, Whole No. 4461, October 16, 1999), 20. In response to the question: "Do these groups [reactionary groups in the church today] see the trends of the modern world in the way Pius IX saw the 19th century's philosophies and ideologies as threats?" Löser replies: "Yes. They interpret Balthasar's theology in the light of their interests, and so a unilateral interpretation emerges. I am sure Balthasar would not like it. He did not like timid or closed thinking. This kind of interpretation of Balthasar's theology usually involves emphasizing the extreme religious experiences of Adrienne von Speyr, a medical doctor with whom Balthasar formed a spiritual community in the 1940's."

⁵⁷Joseph Ratzinger, "Das Problem der christlichen Prophetie, Niels Christian Hvidt im Gespräch mit Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger" in *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift "Communio"* 28 (March-April 1999), 182-183. Cf. Rino Fisichella, "Hans Urs von Balthasar e Adrienne von Speyr: L'inseparabilità delle due opere" in *Rivista internazionale di teologia e cultura: Communio* 156 (1997), 65. Fisichella speaks of Adrienne's theological contributions as fruit of the gift of *prophecy*, rather than of *mysticism*: "A nostro avviso, si comprende l'opera e la funzione della von Speyr se la inserisce nell'orizzonte della profezia contemporanea. Adrienne von Speyr non è stata una mistica, ma ha vissuto il carisma profetico [...] la profezia, infatti, è data a ogni battezzato (cfr. At 2, 17). Ciò non toglie, comunque, che ci si possa accostare ai suoi scritti e alla sua testimonianza con interesse critico valutando e discernendo, di volta in volta, ciò che può essere coerente con una forma di profezia e ciò che appartiene ad altri campi di indagine." Cf. Jacques Servais, "The *ressourcement* of contemporary spirituality under the guidance of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23 (Summer 1996) transl. David Louis Schindler, Jr., 307-308. Servais emphasizes the attitude of Marian availability of von Balthasar's and von Speyr's common mission: "Their work is, in its internal account, a 'trans-mission,' a mission of passage, a hidden service rendered to the

In order to dispel the notion that his work could be separated from Adrienne's, von Balthasar devoted a whole book to detailing their united mission.⁵⁸

As to the impact that von Balthasar had on Adrienne's work, without question he played an important role. As noted above, he accompanied her in spiritual direction and edited and published her many works. Although Adrienne never received any proper theological instruction from von Balthasar, she did hear his homilies and spiritual instructions which he gave to the early members of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*. Sometimes, she would assist in the preparation of his books for publication by making certain suggestions and minor corrections. Von Balthasar underscores that, on the one hand, she had complete freedom when dictating to him, whether she was giving an interpretation of a passage from Scripture or an insight into some particular theological theme. On the other hand, von Balthasar did provide a certain amount of preparation regarding the best way to give the scriptural meditations.⁵⁹ Mainly, it was imperative to Adrienne that von Balthasar gave a certain "ecclesial guidance" to her as he explains: "Above all, my role was to free her from any reflection on herself and to let the whole process be carried out in an atmosphere of trusting obedience to the Church (which was represented by her confessor)."⁶⁰

The interweaving of the work of Adrienne and von Balthasar is especially evident in their common founding of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*.⁶¹ Taking its name from the apostle John, the community draws its spirit from the beloved disciple and the Virgin Mary who at the dying Jesus' request make up the first community of the newly-founded Church. The

Church and to their contemporary world because it is animated, at the deepest level, by an attitude of unconditional availability before God."

⁵⁸H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 11. [13]: "Dieses Buch hat vor allem einen Zweck: zu verhindern, daß nach meinem Tod der Versuch unternommen wird, mein Werk von dem Adrienne von Speyr zu trennen." Cf. Idem, *Unser Auftrag*, 61. [73]: "In diesen späten Werken das Ihre und das Meine reinlich scheiden zu wollen, dürfte ein aussichtsloses Unterfangen sein."

⁵⁹One notes, for example, in the meditations on the Gospel of Mark in *Markus*, each meditation (normally over one scriptural verse) is divided into three points. It appears that von Balthasar would have lent to Adrienne the Ignatian system of dividing a meditation into three points. However, he clarifies that he was only there for the first few dictations. After that, a member of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* would write down the points. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword to Markus, Betrachtungspunkte für eine Gemeinschaft* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1971) Edited with an Introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar, 9. Hereafter cited as *Ma*. Von Balthasar writes: "...nur die ersten Punkte wurden als Einleitung zu den übrigen vom Herausgeber erteilt, der aber beim Vortrag der übrigen in der Gemeinschaft diktieren und mitstenographierten nicht mehr anwesend war." Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 49-50. [59-60].

⁶⁰H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 50-51. [60].

⁶¹Cf. Jacques Servais, "The Community of St. John" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 19 (Summer, 1992) Transl. Michael M. Waldstein, 208-219. In this article, Servais makes several important points. First, he notes that von Balthasar stated specifically on several occasions that, in order of importance, the founding and continued—above all, spiritual—growth of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* was first, the publishing of Adrienne's writings, second, and the publication of his own writings, third. Second, Servais proposes that a study be done of, as von Balthasar calls them, "his numerous attempts to describe the form of life of a secular institute." (Cf. *Unser Auftrag*, 88, n. 14. [104-105, n. 14]. Von Balthasar lists nineteen of his own writings where he grappled with the theme.) Servais insists that a study of this kind would penetrate to the heart of von Balthasar's work. Furthermore, such a study would also have to include Adrienne's work. Third, Servais underscores Adrienne's original theological impulse and inspiration which lies at the heart of the founding of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*.

Community of St. John is divided into three branches: lay women, lay men and diocesan priests. Each branch lives the spirit of the community but with a different emphasis. The *lay women* look especially to Mary who in her disponibility remains open to whatever mission God bestows upon her. The *lay men* model themselves especially on John whom the Lord willed to "remain" in the world (*Jn* 21, 21ff) beyond the realm of the priestly office. In their professions they embody not only a Johanine spirit, but also a Marian one. The *priests* model themselves after John who was bestowed with a special closeness to the priesthood of Jesus at the Last Supper (*Jn* 13, 23) and the Crucifixion (*Jn* 19, 34-37). But later when Mary is united with the Petrine Church, he steps into the shadows (*Jn* 21, 15). Members of each branch make promises of poverty, chastity and obedience.⁶²

1.3.2 The Theological Themes

Because of the large quantity of her writings (sixty volumes, fifteen thousand pages) and the richness of her work, any attempt to briefly summarize the theology of Adrienne von Speyr is difficult. Moreover, her contributions cut across all the theological disciplines: trinitarian theology, Christology, ecclesiology, protology, eschatology, moral, scriptural and pastoral theology. Nonetheless, it is possible to begin with the two things which Adrienne longingly yearned for but could not find in her Protestant faith of the first thirty-eight years of her life: *confession* and the *Blessed Mother*. The fundamental attitude of *obedience* is found both in Mary and the penitent in the act of sacramental confession: both stand in naked vulnerability before the Lord in complete disponibility to his grace. The *Son*, who incarnates this obedience perfectly, stands always in total disponibility to the Father, while the *Father* allows the Son to live in divine freedom. The *Holy Spirit* unites both forms of love. On the Cross, the Son lives obedience to the very end in allowing himself to be completely abandoned. Adrienne understands that the Son "leaves behind" his divinity, renouncing all sensible contact with the Father, such that he experiences the separation of the sinner from God. The Son, who "confesses" man's sins to the Father on

⁶²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 101-197. [119-179]. The second half of *Unser Auftrag* is a plan for the *Johannesgemeinschaft*. Cf. Ein Mitglied, "Kurze Darstellung der Johannesgemeinschaft" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 49-57. In this conference from the 1985 symposium, an original female member of the Community of St. John gives some historical background and describes the spirit of the institute. She also gives some insightful practical descriptions of the life and spirit of the community: "[Adrienne] wußte zum Beispiel genau, wo sie ansetzen mußte, um jemanden aus Egoismus, Bequemlichkeit und dem Widerstreben, das Verlangte zu tun, zu befreien. Ganz zu Beginn spürte sie einmal, wie ein künftiges Mitglied Mühe hatte, seine liebevoll eingerichtete Wohnung zu verlassen und mit seinen Möbeln in das öde Haus zu ziehen, das die Gruppe gemietet hatte. Da bot Adrienne der Kandidaten eines Abends an, deren Bücher in ihrem eigenen Wagen in das Haus zu bringen; am nächsten Morgen folgte die Besitzerin bereitwillig ihren geliebten Büchern, die natürlich schon in der künftigen gemeinsamen Bibliothek eingereiht standen." (p. 53-54) "Natürlich kannte Adrienne unser häufiges Versagen und unsere Schwierigkeiten. Sie verweilte nie länger dabei, wenn wir uns dazu bekannten, sondern sagte oft: 'Ich werde etwas dafür tun.' Wir wußten, daß damit Buße gemeint war." (p. 56) Cf. Maximilian Greiner, "The Community of St. John: A Conversation with Cornelia Capol and Martha Gisi" in AA.VV., *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (San Francisco: Communio Books/Ignatius Press, 1991) Ed. David L. Schindler, 87-101. Greiner interviews two original members of the woman's branch of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*.

the Cross, dies in order to bring new life.⁶³

Von Balthasar notes that in Adrienne's theology, it is Mary who unites the christological and ecclesiological themes. At the Cross, Mary is given to John, but in his priesthood, the beloved disciple is also linked to Peter. John unites the Petrine and Marian spirit. Thus, Peter, who represents the institutional Church, must allow himself to be permeated by a Marian spirit of disponibility in order to bear increased fruitfulness to the Church and the world. All three attitudes--*Marian*, *Petrine* and *Johanine*--are imperative for true renewal in the Church.⁶⁴

In *Unser Auftrag*, von Balthasar delineates four significant aspects of Adrienne's *ecclesial theology*. The first three are treated in this subsection and the fourth in the one that follows.⁶⁵ First, Adrienne places an emphasis on *bodiliness* and *embodiment* in every area of her theology. She sees that the bodily fruitfulness of man and woman is redeemed and raised to the level of sacrament precisely because Mary allowed the Son of God to become flesh in a virginal way in her womb and because the virgin Son begets and gives birth the Church on the Cross. Von Balthasar writes: "The order of Creation is placed into the christological and ecclesial order of Redemption."⁶⁶ For our study on Christian marriage in the writings of Adrienne von Speyr, we will be especially attentive to what she has to say about *bodiliness* and *embodiment* in the man-woman relationship, in Christ and in the Church. Since, as von Balthasar notes, the themes of *bodiliness* and *embodiment* are so central in Adrienne's work, there will be no shortage of material to draw from.

Second, the aspect of *mission* is particularly prominent in Adrienne's theology. Every Christian has a particular, concrete mission or task in the Church. However, Adrienne underscored that there are certain fundamental missions which make up the Church's

⁶³Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 53-55. [64-65]. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Theologie des Abstiegs zur Hölle" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 138-146. Cf. Wilhelm Maas, "Das Geheimnis des Karsamstags" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 128-137. Both of these presentations provide valuable details and elaboration on Adrienne's "theology of the three days."

⁶⁴Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 55-56. [66]. Cf. Godfried Kardinal Danneels, "Maria, Bereitschaft und Beichthaltung" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 90-105. Utilizing excerpts from three main works of Adrienne (*Magd des Herrn*, *Das Buch vom Gehorsam*, *Die Beichte*), Cardinal Danneels shows how *disponibility* and the proper *confessional disposition* are embodied in Mary. Cf. Antonio Sicari, "Mary, Peter and John: Figures of the Church" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20 (Summer 1993), 189-208.

⁶⁵What von Balthasar designates as *charismatische Ausweitungen* [charismatic expansions] in *Erster Blick*, in *Unser Auftrag* he calls *Themen* [themes], or more specifically, *Kirchentheologie* [ecclesial theology]. In our treatment, we adopt his practice of the later work (*Unser Auftrag*). Above all, it is clear that any charism which Adrienne received was at the foundation of her theological themes. Her theology, therefore, is fruit of something she received and gave back to the Church for further enrichment. In this way, her theology truly is ecclesial, and at the same time, stimulated by God-given charisms. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Adriennes Charisma" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 173-182. In order to describe Adrienne's charism, Von Balthasar utilizes a number of key words which are at the heart of her spirit and writings: *Indifferenz* [indifference: in the Ignatian sense], *Verfügbarkeit* [disponibility], *Beichthaltung* [confessional disposition], *Gehorsam* [obedience], *Armut* [poverty], *Jungfräulichkeit* [virginity] and *Liebe* [love].

⁶⁶H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 56-57. [67]. Cf. Georges Chantraine, "Das Verhältnis von Christus zur Kirche als Urbild für Ehe und Jungfräulichkeit" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 74-89. Chantraine penetrates Adrienne's "theology of the sexes." This theme will be taken up and elaborated on especially in *Chapters 8 and 10* of this thesis.

essential foundations. Each mission varies in its nature, but is complementary with the others, as noted in Adrienne's insights into the persons of Mary, John and Peter.⁶⁷

Third, Adrienne's theology exhibits a keen understanding of the *fundamental attributes of authentic holiness*. In responding to the God-given charism of "being allowed into" the prayer life of the saints, Adrienne was able "to see" the prayer of a number of Christians. The posthumous work *Das Allerheiligenbuch*⁶⁸ [*The Book of All Saints*], is fruit of this special charism. Von Balthasar explains that Adrienne was given access to a particular saint's attitude toward God, not just his or her earthly work as a priest, artist, doctor, theologian etc. She saw that not all saints are perfectly holy. Some, more than others, are able to live the fundamental attributes of authentic holiness: disponibility and transparency before God and men, obedience, humility and prayerfulness, to name a few. Consequently, Adrienne perceived that the fruitfulness of a saint's mission suffers in proportion to the magnitude of the defects in sanctity.⁶⁹

1.3.3 Theology of Ecclesial Mysticism

Adrienne's *theology of ecclesial mysticism* is also of particular significance. Unlike most anything else that is labeled as "mysticism," truly Catholic mysticism is a charism which is given over for the increased fruitfulness in the Church. Since von Balthasar worked so closely with Adrienne von Speyr as her spiritual director, it is worthwhile to cite an important passage in full where he articulates the meaning of *objective mysticism*:

In the book *Objektive Mystik* [*Objective Mysticism*], it is shown that what is seen, heard and experienced can be nothing other than one aspect of objective revelation upon which a more intense light is shed in order to assist the faithful's understanding in the present day. In this way, many trinitarian, christological and ecclesiological doctrines are given a new emphasis or they regain a forgotten relevance. Many mystical phenomena in Adrienne's existence---stigmata, transferences, the radiating of light, levitations, speaking in tongues, and others of the like---certainly occurred, but without accentuation. They were merely meant to serve as accompaniments to shed light on what was of fundamental importance: what was to be passed on to the Church, in an invisible way through prayer and strenuous penance, and made visible through the dictated works. The criterion of the authenticity of her mysticism is found primarily, if not exclusively, in the *quality* of what she accomplished and what she had and has to say.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 57-59. [68-70].

⁶⁸Cf. NB I/1. Cf. A. von Speyr, *Die Nachlasswerke*, Vol. I/2, *Das Allerheiligenbuch II. Mit Nachträgen zu den Nachlaßbänden* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1977) Edited with an Introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as NB I/2.

⁶⁹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 59-60. [71]; Idem, *Erster Blick*, 63-71. [71-81].

⁷⁰H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 60-61. [72-73]; *Erster Blick*, 75-79. [85-90]. Cf. Paola Ricci Sindone, *Adrienne von Speyr, Storia di una esistenza teologica* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1996) 45-82. Sindone devotes all of the second part (of four) of her book to the theme of *objective mysticism*. Part II.I is especially valuable. Here she examines the theme throughout the Church's tradition, before treating it

Therefore, Adrienne's mysticism is "objective, rather than subjective, theological rather than psychological. Its center of gravity is not Adrienne herself, her inner states and feelings, but the realities of the Catholic faith, upon which her experiences throw a new light."⁷¹

1.3.4 The Writings

The writings of Adrienne von Speyr are fruit of her life as a medical doctor, wife, mother, Catholic mystic, co-foundress of a secular institute and a suffering invalid. Most importantly, her works stem from a most profound life of prayer. Although a few of Adrienne's books were written in manuscript form, most of them originated from dictations to von Balthasar. Of her sixty published volumes, the *commentaries on Scripture* number twenty-three volumes. Adrienne commented on some of the Old Testament (the creation accounts of *Genesis*, *Job*, *The Song of Songs*, *Isaiah*, some of the *Psalms*, some of the *First* and *Second Book of Kings*) and much of the New Testament (the entire Gospels of *John* and *Mark*, parts of *Matthew* and *Luke*, *Romans 8*, *1 Corinthians*, *Colossians*, *Philippians*, *Ephesians*, and the *Letter of James*, the *Letters of Peter* and *John*, and the *Book of Revelation*). Adrienne produced twenty *thematic works* on different topics of the Catholic faith: engagement, marriage, Mary, prayer, confession, death, vocation, the states of life, obedience and the Mass. Finally, the twelve volumes of the *posthumous works* center on themes such as the theology of the sexes, prayer of the saints, subjective and objective mysticism, St. Ignatius and Adrienne's experiences of the Lord's Passion and other spiritual insights and experiences which von Balthasar dutifully chronicled during the twenty-seven years of their collaboration.⁷²

specifically in Adrienne's writings in II-II-III. Cf. A. von Speyr, *Apokalypse, Betrachtungen über die Geheime Offenbarung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1950) With an Introduction by H.U. von Balthasar, 168. Hereafter cited as *Ap.* Cf. Eadem, *Das Wort und die Mystik I: Subjektive Mystik, Die Nachlasswerke*, Vol. V (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1970) Edited and with a Foreword by H.U. von Balthasar, 17-19.63-66.71-75. Hereafter cited as *NB V*.

⁷¹J. Saward, "From a Terrace on the Rhine," 77. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 46. [53]: "Vorweg ist klar, daß diese 'Mystik' eine solche des reinen magdlichen Dienstes ist, der jede Reflexion auf sich abgeht. Dienst schaut geradeaus auf die Aufgabe. Est ist also eine radikal antipsychologische, theologische und heilsgeschichtliche Mystik." Cf. Idem, *Erster Blick*, 50. [57]: "[Und] als Dienst hat ja Adrienne ihren Auftrag verstanden--, und zwar nicht zu peripheren Auswüchsen der Theologie, nicht zum Ausbau von 'Seitenkapelle' im Dom der bestehenden Dogmatik, sondern im Gegenteil zu ihrer *zentralen Vertiefung und Verlebendigung*."

⁷²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Das literarische Werk Adriennes von Speyr," in *Sanctificatio nostra* 22 (1957): 20. Cf. Idem, *Erster Blick*, 89-97. [102-111]. Cf. AA.VV., *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 185-188. This book includes a bibliography of Adrienne's works that were available at the time (1985) in German, French, Spanish, Italian and English. Since then, more of her works have been translated into English. For a complete list of the works available in German and English, see the bibliography of the present work. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 86-87. [99]. Von Balthasar explains the nature of the *posthumous works*: "Obschon es nicht möglich ist, zwischen 'gewöhnlichen' und 'rein mystischen' Werken eine scharfe Grenzlinie zu ziehen, habe ich doch jene Werke, worin das Charismatische offenkundig heraustrat, nicht zu Lebzeiten der Verfasserin veröffentlichen wollen---es hätte in ihr Leben und in das ihrer Familie unnötige Unruhe gebracht---, sie vielmehr unter dem Sammeltitle 'Nachlaßwerke' in zwölf Bänden (die zum Teil Doppelbände sein werden) geordnet."

Often, readers of Adrienne's works are surprised when they discover that she read very few theological or spiritual works. Having translated St. Thérèse's *Story of a Soul*, Adrienne was familiar with the spirituality of the "Little Flower." Also, she accepted von Balthasar's suggestion to read the *Letters of St. Ignatius* and was familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁷³ Moreover, she read a few works of Cardinal Newman, very little of St. Teresa of Avila, the rules of St. Benedict and St. Francis of Assisi and some of Charles de Foucauld. However, von Balthasar remarks that he "never saw her read a book you could actually call theological."⁷⁴ Adrienne especially liked to read literature. She read the works of Bernanos, Hoffmanstahl, Mauriac, Péguy, Reinhold Schneider, Goethe, Victor Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Claudel, Hölderlin and others. She was also fond of French novels, the work of French women writers, stories which concerned human destinies and detective stories.⁷⁵

Adrienne's commentaries on Sacred Scripture, which make up the major part of her *corpus*, were given in dictation to von Balthasar, as noted above. He describes the process:

Almost always she dictated for twenty minutes or half an hour each afternoon. Adrienne would sit in an armchair with her small French Second New Testament. She would read the verse, close her eyes, reflect for a few seconds, and then begin to dictate fluidly, usually very rapidly so that being a poor stenographer, I followed only with difficulty and frequently had to ask her to pause for a moment.⁷⁶

When Adrienne first began to dictate to von Balthasar, her thoughts and ideas did not always flow out in a perfectly coherent way. Thus, they would later need to be edited for final redaction. But within a short time, she improved her dictating technique such that what she gave von Balthasar was often ready for publication without the need of much editing.⁷⁷

It is not easy to categorize the nature of Adrienne's commentaries on Sacred Scripture. Different from an exegete who examines a biblical verse within the context of its historical situation and who studies textual changes in the process of redaction, Adrienne would listen to the Word of God beckoning from the heart of the Church, where "making himself accessible, the triune God communicates his eternal mystery of love to the beloved Bride of the Son, the Church. [...] Essentially, Adrienne heard all the words of the New Testament as an expression of trinitarian life."⁷⁸ Mainly, Adrienne experienced Sacred

⁷³Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 49. [59]. Cf. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Theresia vom Kinde Jesu: Geschichte einer Seele* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1947) Translation with an Introduction by Adrienne von Speyr. Edited with a Foreword by Hans Urs von Balthasar. The edition of Adrienne's translation was later made obsolete by the critical edition. Cf. Louis J. Puhl, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951).

⁷⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 35-36. [40-41].

⁷⁵Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 20-21, n. 16. [24, n. 16]; Idem, *Erster Blick*, 34. [38-39]. Adrienne read the following French woman authors: Beatrix Beck, Clarisse Fancillon, Françoise Mallet-Joris, Louise de Vilmorin, Zoe Oldenbourg, Adrienne Monnier and Anne Muré.

⁷⁶H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 86. [98].

⁷⁷Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 86. [98].

⁷⁸Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 88-89. [100-101]. Cf. Johannes Schiettecatte, *Disponibilità Aimante. L'attitude d'amour Johannique chez Adrienne von Speyr à la lumière de l'exégèse contemporaine* (Rome: Doctoral Dissertation, Pontifical Theology Faculty "Teresianum," 1998) Cf. Marc Ouellet, "Zwei Arten

Scripture in a truly spiritual way, where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicate something of the mystery of their divine union and invite one to participate in it. Her scriptural commentaries fall under all four senses of scripture: literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, even though they are deeply spiritual, they remain concrete. Adrienne has a way of explaining particular insights into God in a way that is often easy to grasp and conducive to contemplation. Her mode of expression is particularly well-adapted to the Christian who is not highly trained in theology. Consequently, her writings have the potential to appeal to people from all walks of life: married men and women, theologians, religious, lay men and women, priests, seminarians and young adults.

1.4 Anthologies and Secondary Sources

As noted above, by the time Adrienne died in 1967, her writings had not received much notice.⁸⁰ In the interim, as more of her works have become available in other languages, interest has grown among those who live in households, seminaries and religious houses. Two main *anthologies* of her works are available. Von Balthasar completed one before he died.⁸¹ A second important, two volume work was produced by Barbara Albrecht.⁸² Paola Ricci Sindone has recently authored a book which combines biographical elements and an overview of Adrienne's theological vision.⁸³ In the last two years, three key *doctoral theses* have been completed. Each of these works has already been cited above in order to assist in this introduction to Dr. von Speyr's life and work. Johannes Schiettecatte examined Adrienne's "Johanine reading" of Scripture in contrast with modern exegetical

die Schrift zu Deuten" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 154-155. Ouellet identifies three characteristic traits of Adrienne's method of commenting on Scripture. First, she sees in each Word of God a revelation of his divine truth. Rather than referring to other words or scriptural books, she comments on a particular word, passage or verse one after the other. Second, Adrienne contemplates a particular Gospel or letter (Paul, Peter etc.) from the point of view of the author who has a specific God-given mission. She captures the "missional" spirit of the author. Third, in Adrienne's scriptural commentaries, one finds a certain simplicity, certainty and profundity.

⁷⁹Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume I, The Four Senses of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 and Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1998) Transl. Mark Sebanc with a Foreword by Robert Louis Wilken, 15-75. Cf. Ignace de la Potterie, "Le sens spirituel de l'Écriture" in *Gregorianum* 78, 4 (1997), 627-645. The following works have a predominant: *anagogical* interpretation: *Die Schöpfung*; *moral* interpretation: *Der Kolosserbrief*, *Der Epheserbrief*; and *allegorical* interpretation: *Das Hohelied*. Cf. Joseph Fessio, "Wie Liest Man Adrienne von Speyr?" in *Adrienne von Speyr und Ihre Kirchliche Sendung*, 158-159. Fessio underlines that Adrienne's work must be read slowly and prayerfully. If one tries to "speed-read," often the more subtle truths which she conveys are overlooked.

⁸⁰Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 9. [12]: "Obschon bei Adriennes Tod siebenunddreißig ihrer Bücher gedruckt, davon vierunddreißig im Buchhandel waren, hat sich doch bisher niemand ernstlich mit ihrem schriftlichen Werk befaßt."

⁸¹Cf. A. von Speyr, *Kostet und Seht, Ein Theologisches Lesebuch* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1988) Chosen from her works and with an Introduction by Hans Urs von Balthasar.

⁸²Cf. Barbara Albrecht, *Eine Theologie des Katholischen, Einführung in das Werk Adrienne von Speyrs, Band I, Durchblick in Texten* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1972); Eadem, *Eine Theologie des Katholischen, Einführung in das Werk Adrienne von Speyrs, Band II, Darstellung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1973).

⁸³Cf. Paola Ricci Sindoni, *Adrienne von Speyr (1902-1967), Storia di una esistenza teologica*.

methods.⁸⁴ William Schmitt investigated her understanding of sacramental confession as a *sequela Christi*.⁸⁵ Justin Matro penetrated the authoress's theology of Christian suffering.⁸⁶ These works are invaluable for our present study and will be cited from time to time. Although a couple of works have been completed which examined von Balthasar's theology of marriage, as noted in the *Introduction*, no comprehensive work has been produced which examines Adrienne von Speyr's thought in the realm of the man-woman relationship, marriage and family. This thesis represents a first attempt to study Adrienne's contributions in this area.

Regarding *articles* and *other contributions* which have focused on Adrienne's writings, in addition to those already cited from the 1985 symposium, a number of contributions have been published as indicated in the *Bibliography*. However, for the most part, these works have focused on Adrienne's "theology of Holy Saturday," her understanding of confession or her theological vision as a whole. Little has been published on her contributions to marriage and family studies.

1.5 Conclusion

In this overview of Adrienne von Speyr's theological mission, it was underlined that her life and work are closely connected to her writings. Indeed, her writings flow from her early family life experiences, her difficult youth, her studies in medicine, the long road to conversion, her medical practice, two marriages, her physical and spiritual suffering, her collaboration with Hans Urs von Balthasar, the spiritual gifts and charisms bestowed upon her and her profound life of prayer. In summary, Adrienne's writings come out of a rich life and faith experience.

Thus, Adrienne's writings come forth from an authentic experience of *marriage* and *family* and from her *medical practice*. Grappling with real marriage situations, Adrienne can be said to be in solidarity with married persons. Furthermore, her tangible experience of the human condition to which she was exposed during the many hours patients came to her for advice is clearly evident in the concreteness and relevance of her writings on marriage and family. Adrienne's insights into the realm of *bodiliness* and *embodiment* are therefore fruit of her experience in marriage, but also in the practice of medicine.

Finally, it is clear that Adrienne's long road to *conversion* and the subsequent spiritual gifts she received cannot be overlooked. Her long search for God in her early life really was just beginning with her conversion. Indeed, she always longed to penetrate deeper into God's mysteries. Nonetheless, she insisted that von Balthasar give her continual spiritual guidance. If she was given any special gift or charism, it was not hoarded for herself, but given over to her spiritual director (representing the Church) to do with as he deemed necessary. During her lifetime, Adrienne readily took on much suffering, both bodily and spiritual, and received certain charisms. Our focus, however, will be on her

⁸⁴Cf. Johannes Schiettecatte, *Disponibilité Aimante. L'attitude d'amour Johannique chez Adrienne von Speyr à la lumière de l'exégèse contemporaine*.

⁸⁵Cf. W. Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a "Sequela Christi" in the Writings of A. von Speyr*.

⁸⁶Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering in the Spiritual Writings of Adrienne von Speyr*.

writings, which represent one of the visible spiritual fruits of her life and charismatic experiences. Examining Adrienne von Speyr's writings, the reader will be able to determine for him or herself if they truly do make a significant contribution to marriage and family studies.

Part II: The Biblical Sources of Adrienne von Speyr's Theology of Marriage

Throughout her twenty-three commentaries on Sacred Scripture, in particular those on the New Testament, Adrienne expounds on a number of themes that pertain to Christian marriage. Adrienne's treatment of marriage is not given to the reader in the form of a systematic presentation; rather it springs forth from her contemplation of the living Word of God. Not only is she attentive to the traditional texts pertaining to marriage and the man-woman relationship, such as the creation accounts of *Genesis* 1 and 2, *The Song of Songs*, *Mark* 10, 1-12, *Ephesians* 5, and 1 *Corinthians* 7, but she also treats marriage in less expected places such as *John* 1, 9.

In this part, we will expose each theme as it unfolds within the context of a particular work by Adrienne von Speyr. At times, a certain theme is addressed in several different works. However, precisely because the same theme is found in distinct works, a different light is cast on it. For example, Adrienne describes the roles of the Christian spouses in her commentaries on both *Ephesians* 5, 21-33 and *John* 2 (the wedding feast at Cana). However, in *Ephesians*, the roles of man and woman are seen more in light of the Christ-Church relationship, while in *John* they are seen more in light of the relationship between Jesus and Mary. By addressing a certain theme within a given writing, we will be able to experience the richness of Adrienne's treatment of marriage in her commentaries on Sacred Scripture.

Part II includes Chapters 2 through 5. Chapter 2 is an examination of commentaries on two Old Testament books. Chapter 3 studies Adrienne's insights on marriage in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Mark*. Chapter 4 addresses marriage in *John* and Chapter 5 includes marriage themes in the Pauline works.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Marriage in the Old Testament

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine two of Adrienne's writings: *Die Schöpfung* [Creation], a commentary on *Genesis* 1 and 2, and *Das Hohelied* [The Song of Songs], a commentary on *The Song of Songs*. Although Adrienne produced commentaries on a number of the Old Testament books,¹ marriage themes arise mainly in these two works. In *Die Schöpfung*, Adrienne contemplates the God-man and woman-man relationships before and after the fall. In *Das Hohelied*, she reflects on the man-woman relationship in the light of Christ and his Church.

2.2 *Die Schöpfung*

Die Schöpfung, one of the more difficult works of Adrienne von Speyr, was dictated to von Balthasar beginning in February of 1946.² In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar explains how Adrienne encountered the *Genesis* creation accounts:

Again and again A. is astonished in the face of the paradox that she forcefully experienced: that she could see something that existed even before the origin of the first human eye. [...] The interpretation occurs in a sphere that lies beyond the question of the 'historical' reality of the account, that in a description of pre-human events is obvious. Throughout it treats of essential principles, that remain just as valid for 'modern' men as [they were] for a Jewish or medieval reader. One may not speak of such a reading as 'allegorical.' Such a reading is not meant to convey the figurative meaning of the description account, but rather its real meaning.³

Therefore, in our study of Adrienne's meditations on *Genesis* 1 and 2, we too want to penetrate to the real meaning of the creation accounts. Above all, we will be attentive to several relevant themes which emerge: the pre-existence of the Cross, the creation of man and woman, original fruitfulness, the fall into sin and God's response. We now treat each of these themes respectively in the sections which follow.

2.2.1 The Pre-existence of the Cross

Before God created man and woman, the Cross of Christ already existed. Adrienne explains how after heaven and earth, water and land are separated,⁴ there is a moment when a shadow seems to appear over the earth. This is the shadow of the Cross. Yet, the Cross-

¹In addition to her commentaries on *Genesis* 1 and 2 and *The Song of Songs*, Adrienne also gave commentaries on other Old Testament personages and writings: on the prophet Elijah (*Elijah*), on Job (*Job*), on a number of the Psalms (*Achtzehn Psalmen*), on the Book of Isaiah (*Isaias*) and on the calling of the prophets (*Die Sendung der Propheten*).

²A. von Speyr, *Die Schöpfung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1972). Hereafter cited as *Sc. Sc* centers mainly on the *Genesis* 1 account of creation. The first 80 pages are dedicated to commentaries on *Gn* 1. In the final 44 pages of the book, Adrienne considers the creation of Adam, then Eve and the fall into sin (*Gn* 2). Cf. *NB IX*, 5.

³H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Die Schöpfung*, 7-8.

⁴Cf. *Gn* 1, 6-9.

shadow is blurred; only the vague outline of the Cross can be perceived. When God creates man and woman, it appears that they stand between the will of God and the Cross. At this point, they have two choices: they can remain bound to God and only seek to do his will or they can turn away from him and encounter the Cross.⁵

Adrienne emphasizes that in the precise moment that God created man and woman in his image,⁶ he gave them both the call to himself and the way to him. At the same time, he also placed the Cross before them:

As a result of creating a freedom, it is as if God felt compelled to give along with that freedom that which prevents the complete rejection of it. Like the mother who allows her child to make his first steps, who stands ready to catch him should he stumble. And the Cross is already there before man existed. Its shadow does not originate from nothing, but from the reality of the foreseen Cross.⁷

Therefore, although the Son's Incarnation was still situated historically in the future, his Cross was foreshadowed in Creation. Adrienne portrays the Cross's shadow as a manifestation of God's concern for man.

2.2.2 Created in His Image

After God created the heavens and the earth, the plants and the animals, he then created man and woman. Adrienne notes how man and woman do not exist suspended in nothing. Instead, the world offers a stability in the face of the dizziness of being a creature. It is the world's stability which serves as an initial foundation for man. He can rely on the stability of nature "to get his bearings," to be established in the world. However, man does not only enjoy stability in the world, but also he is inclined towards God, his Creator.⁸

⁵Cf. Sc, 52. Although the Genesis account is certainly a past event, often Adrienne's commentary is articulated in the present tense. Thus, there is a certain amount of "back-and-forth" between past and present tenses. In this section on *Die Schöpfung*, often, if not always, we will adopt the practice of having the first one or two sentences of each paragraph, the "topic sentences," in the past tense with the rest of the text in the present. In this way, we attempt to simulate the commentary that states the pertinent passage from Genesis in the past tense, followed by Adrienne's commentary in the present. By encountering the commentary in the present tense, the reader can gain some sense of how Adrienne encountered the Genesis text. She encountered it from within, as if it were occurring before her eyes, as von Balthasar alludes to in the introduction.

⁶Here A. is commenting on Gn 1, 26-27: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." All biblical citations are taken from the *Revised Standard Version* unless otherwise noted. Adrienne, at least in this work, places no particular emphasis on God's words: "Let us make man..." (emphasis mine). In other words, although she sees the God of creation as trinitarian and affirms that man and woman are created in the image of the trinitarian God, she does underline the "us" as definitive proof.

⁷Sc, 53. If man has not yet sinned, why would the Cross already be present? It is clear that Adrienne views the Creation event from a christological standpoint. She wants to emphasize the redeeming Son, as well as the creating Father. Creation is a trinitarian event in which the eternally begotten Son is eternally ready to redeem, just as the Father is eternally ready to create. The Holy Spirit comes forth from both the Father and the Son and is eternally ready to unite them to each other (immanent Trinity) and to unite men to God (economic Trinity).

⁸Cf. Sc, 37: "Sie [die Welt] ist für ihn eine Sicherung gegen das Schwindelgefühl der Kreatürlichkeit [...] Er muß auf dem Boden der Natur stehen, und auch sie muß ihn zu Gott führen."

While the stability of nature directed man towards God, the man-woman relationship provided a more powerful means for “reaching” God. Adrienne explains:

In man, solitude has been overcome. Indeed he needs the other in order to fulfill his own purpose. In being one to the other, man experiences that he is not abandoned: *I* entrusts to *thou* even though not knowing it. The man, who exists in freedom between God and the woman, is gifted by God with leadership and referred to the woman. And the woman, who must acknowledge the leadership of the man, at the same time, shows him that he has received her from God and he must allow himself to be led by God. In this way responsibility is laid on both. Had God created only one man, he would not have known how he should conduct himself with regard to God and the rest of creation. Instead, both gifts are immediately given: fulfillment and responsibility. From the beginning, man and woman mutually are the means for each other to reach God.⁹

Therefore, not only is solitude overcome, but also man and woman are given particular roles to carry out within their relationship. The man leads the woman, while the woman leads the man to God.¹⁰ Both are given mutual responsibility to help each other to encounter God and live in him.

Above all, God created man and woman in his image, simultaneously giving them participation in trinitarian life and unity. The human person is created in the image of the *trinitarian* God, wherein “the love of the Father possesses in itself the love of the Son and the Spirit and vice versa.”¹¹ Out of this co-possession, God “creates [...] man and woman and, at the same time, gives them participation in trinitarian unity: the unity of both man and woman is constitutive for man.”¹² Commenting on *Genesis 1, 28a* (“And God blessed them”), Adrienne describes man’s participation in trinitarian life:

Man in the Trinity is not a point of rest in the midst of the divine Persons. To the contrary, he turns within their three-fold movement, he is simultaneously attracted to all three Persons and power centers, so strongly that it would tear him apart, if God’s power did not allow him to stay in the midst of the Three. [...] Because the creating Father has established and blessed men in his image, he has granted insight into his being and essence to those men for whom he deemed it good. [...] And in this same instant, every blessing of God becomes for him a sign of his participation [in

⁹Sc, 53.

¹⁰By noting that God already in the primordial state bestows on man a role of leadership in respect to the woman, Adrienne establishes a primordial foundation for the headship of man that would later be re-established on the Christ-Church relationship. One may argue that it would have been difficult for the original man to lead the woman without a reference to Christ as his head. However, in the original state, man and woman would have had an inborn understanding of how to live their roles harmoniously in God. With sin, this inborn understanding was muddled. Therefore, man’s leadership role would need to be re-established on the Christ-Church relationship.

¹¹Sc, 54.

¹²Sc, 53-54. Does man and woman’s participation in God’s unity mean that they become God? No. Rather, they live forth from God’s unity. God’s unity is constitutive for the unity of man and woman, but the two unities remain distinct.

God].¹³

On the one hand, man and woman find their unity in God. On the other hand, without communion between fellow men, the relationship of men to God would also be impossible. In attempting to enter into relationship with the trinitarian God by ignoring his fellow man, man would be driven to despair.¹⁴

Man and woman encountered God in their relating to each other. Moreover, in relating to each other, man and woman come to recognize the mystery of distance and nearness between them. One sees that the other is different and yet related. They begin to understand that this *I-thou* relationship points to an absolute love and can only be fulfilled by it. In this way, man and woman do not only come into a relationship with the trinitarian God, but also they must be “trinitarian” in a way particular to their own relationship. In other words, it is not that man is fixed on God and woman is fixed on God, while ignoring each other. But through gazing on the *thou*, one arrives at God. In opening oneself to the other, man and woman open themselves to God. Both the man and the woman are the beginning of a movement towards God and both find in the life of the Trinity their completeness and fulfillment. Therefore, Adrienne writes, man, woman and God exist in a three-way, “trinitarian” relationship.¹⁵

2.2.3 Fruitfulness in the Original State

Man and woman become aware that God gives them a fruitfulness which is distinct from that of the plants and trees and that God retains power over all fruitfulness. Before God created man and woman, he created plants, fruit trees and vegetation of all kinds.¹⁶ When God creates man and woman, they observe the fruitfulness of the plants and trees and realize that they do not bring about the plants’ fruitfulness; God does. They see that the plants’ fruitfulness is distinct from their own and is a “foretaste” [*Vorstufe*] of their coming fruitfulness. Man and woman also observe that while God grants fruitfulness to plants, he does not give it to all of creation. By not bestowing fruitfulness on rocks, for example, God shows that he retains all fruitfulness in his power.¹⁷

With the creation of man and woman, God gave them their own fruitfulness. He commanded: “Be fruitful and multiply.”¹⁸ At this point, only fruitfulness is mentioned. Not questioning how their fruitfulness comes about, man and woman have an inborn awareness that it is fulfilled only within obedience to God. Indeed, Adrienne stresses that original

¹³Sc, 66-67.

¹⁴Cf. Sc, 54.

¹⁵Cf. Sc, 55-56.

¹⁶Cf. Gn 1,11-12: “And God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

¹⁷Cf. Sc, 41-42. Adrienne implies that fruitfulness is inherent in creation. All living beings are made to be fruitful.

¹⁸Gn 1,28b.

bodily fruitfulness stems from the fruit of an obedient spirit.¹⁹ Therefore, different from plants and trees, God commands man and woman to be fruitful and multiply. Plants, trees and animals will multiply in their own God-gifted way. But the fruitfulness of man and woman is fulfilled in an inborn obedience to God's command to be fruitful.

Everything in the original state was harmonious. Co-existing harmoniously, both body and spirit serve the purpose of the glorification of God.²⁰ As a way of contrast, Adrienne gives an example of one who lives as if God does not exist:

Man will say: 'I feel instincts in me, that are certainly not bad, why ought they not be lived out? As a result my spirit would be stimulated. When they are not carried out, it is as if I were without instinct. To be sure, I am no pure spirit.' Just to speak this way would not make one evil, or even incomprehensible. He speaks as does a man who has not been touched by God yet; he holds onto all his possibilities and employs them according to his judgement.²¹

Instead, in the original state, man and woman would have known that they were touched by God. They would have lived harmoniously in his bosom. Moreover, they did not know concupiscence. As a result, they are completely indifferent toward, and indeed, even unaware of their nakedness.²² They live in total, immediate harmony with God where the fruitfulness of their unity is a result of their spiritual fruitfulness.

Man and woman were also aware of the different roles they each carried out. The man leads; the woman is led. The man possesses the seed of fruitfulness that is brought to fulfillment in the woman. Thus, the woman allows herself to be led by the man into fruitfulness. Furthermore, there is no choice of partners. Both man and woman are simply present; the man does not choose the woman. And in commanding man and woman to be fruitful, God creates the family.²³

Finally, the original fruitfulness of man and woman was also seen in their prayer. Adrienne points out that even before the first man and woman existed, there was a place reserved for future prayer. From eternity, prayer is carried out between the Father and Son

¹⁹Cf. Sc, 73: "Sie erhalten den Befehl Gottes, so vor ihm fruchtbar zu sein, daß diese Fruchtbarkeit zu ihrer Vermehrung führt. Er hat ihnen das Verfügungkönnen über ihre Fruchtbarkeit geschenkt, und diese muß ein *Zeichen* ihre Gehorsams Gott gegenüber werden. [...] Als sei die leibliche Fruchtbarkeit jetzt eine Frucht der geistigen innerhalb des Gehorsams." Adrienne notes: "original bodily fruitfulness stems from an obedient spirit." In this, she underlines the primacy of spiritual fruitfulness in relation to physical fruitfulness. In other works, we will see how A. founds paradisaal bodily fruitfulness *completely* in an obedient spirit. In other words, she holds that paradisaal bodily fruitfulness was completely virginal. This will demand more discussion and explanation, which will be reserved primarily for Part IV.

²⁰Cf. Sc, 29.

²¹Sc, 35.

²²Cf. Sc, 29.

²³Cf. Sc, 73-74: "Sicher ist dabei, daß der Mann führend ist, das Weib geführt, der Mann den Kern zur Fruchtbarkeit besitzt und diese in der Frau sich erfüllt." Adrienne notes that the man's seed comes to fruitfulness in the woman. However, as we will see in more detail further on, if paradisaal man and woman were virginally, bodily and non-sexually fruitful, how does the man's seed come to be placed in the woman? Adrienne does not pose nor answer this question. Although she affirms paradisaal virginal-bodily fruitfulness, she underlines that we can no longer comprehend how exactly it happened.

in the Holy Spirit. Yet even from the beginning, this conversation was about the Cross.²⁴ When God created man and woman, he brought them into a relationship with trinitarian prayer.²⁵

2.2.4 The Fall of Man and God's Response

With the fall into sin, man and woman “robbed themselves” (*sich beraubten*) of unhindered participation in the life and prayer of the Trinity.²⁶ Now they found a community that centers on themselves and excludes God. With the fall, man and woman create an *I-thou* community and “draw a curtain” between them and God.²⁷ Asceticism, abstention, atonement and sacrifice become necessary. Consequently, the relationship between man and woman and God is permanently altered.²⁸

Adrienne explains that already from the beginning, the Son was ready to redeem the world. As noted above, in the beginning, a prefiguration of the Cross exists and is outlined in the first separations.²⁹ Adrienne explains how the Son stands ready to redeem fallen man:

The Son stands in readiness. It is as if he sees himself in Adam. For Adam is the first image of God in the still sinless world, the perfection of the work of creation. The Son accompanies Adam with concern. In the instant when sin makes its appearance [there is] confrontation between sin and the Cross. In this instant the Son already has a human experience of his own: not in himself, but in Adam. It is similar to when a man, out of pure love, decides to undergo a life-endangering, indeed, fatal blood transfusion. At first, it was like a quite distant possibility: someone said to him: ‘Only in case he should be seriously sick...’ Then he actually becomes sick. Yet one hopes that the sickness is not threatening. Then, all of sudden, the sacrifice becomes unpleasant. The Son suffers the operation for the time being not yet in himself, but in the sickness of

²⁴Cf. *Sc*, 31: “Bevor noch ein Mensch ist, der beten und seine Zweckbestimmung erfüllen kann, ist schon ein Platz für das künftige Gebet ausgespart. Er liegt im gegenseitigen Gespräch und in der gegenseitigen Anbetung von Gott Vater und Sohn im Heiligen Geist, und dieses Gespräch dreht sich bei der Welterschaffung von vornherein um das Kreuz.”

²⁵Cf. *Sc*, 61-62: “Gottes Absicht, als er die Menschen als Mann und Weib schuf und sie segnete, war es, sie in dieses trinitarische Gebet einzubeziehen.” That God brought original man and woman into a relationship with trinitarian prayer, does not mean that man and woman would have shared *completely* in God’s prayer. Adrienne states that the trinitarian prayer-conversation was about the Cross, but she does not state that man and woman also shared in this conversation about the Cross. Adrienne’s understanding of man’s participation in trinitarian prayer highlights God’s proximity to man. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword to: A. von Speyr, Die Schöpfung*, 8: “Wenn Adrienne die Tiefe des trinitarischen Verhältnisses Adams zu Gott zeigen will, greift sie zu einer mystischen Gebetserfahrung, die ihr geschenkt worden ist. Dies aber nur, um das für alle gültige Gottesverhältnis eindringlicher zu malen.”

²⁶Cf. *Sc*, 62.

²⁷Cf. *Sc*, 92.

²⁸Cf. *Sc*, 29-30. Adrienne provides more detail regarding the fall in *Theologie der Geschlechter*, which we will study in *Chapter 8*.

²⁹Cf. *Sc*, 31-32. The outline of the cross is prefigured in the “horizontal” separation between heaven and earth and the “vertical” separation between water and land. The horizontal and vertical thus form a cross.

Adam. [...] Adam's fall is like the betrayal of Judas: by sinning he exposes the Lord [to sin] and determines the time of the [Lord's] suffering, like Judas does with the kiss.³⁰

Therefore, in some mysterious way, God the Son undergoes a first human experience, not in himself, for he is not yet incarnate, but in Adam.³¹ It is a type of vicarious experience on the part of God and a foreshadowing of the incarnate Son's experience of sin, especially his experience of Judas' betrayal.

With man's fall into sin, Redemption becomes necessary. Adrienne compares *Creation* to a work of art and man's *Redemption* to the begetting of a child:

When the Father will send the Son into the sinful world to redeem it, then it is as if he begets the eternal Son into the world at that time. But there is a difference between the creation of a work of art by an artist and the begetting of a child by a father. At the Creation of the world, the Son, begotten by the divine Father in the world, is realized like the work of art: according to plan, the Son, as it were, is like the last thought of God in the world, and the whole world is laid onto him.³²

Thus, while acknowledging that "in him all things were created," as St. Paul does in *Colossians* 1, 16, Adrienne elevates the Redemption event over Creation. Redemption is not analogous to the creation of a "work of art," but to the "begetting or procreation of a child," a more intimate act that comes from within a person. God's Redemption of man is the most profound act of "begetting," for all are made sons and daughters of the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

More profoundly, with Redemption, the Father begets man anew in his Spirit so that the redeemed world can participate in the begetting of the Son.

But the Son is not yet begotten into the created world in a living way, and so the world does not yet live directly out of his life and Spirit. When the Son becomes man for the Redemption of the world, he will give to the world the Spirit of the Father and his own Spirit. In other words, the Father will beget us anew in his Spirit as his sons. In this way, the world can return to the Father, participating in the begetting of the Son, as a created world in the Holy Spirit.³³

Therefore, not only does the Father beget fallen man anew in his Spirit as his sons, but the world returns to the Father and participates as the created world in the Holy Spirit in the begetting of the Son. Because the being-begotten and the being-created become a unity in

³⁰Sc, 38-39.

³¹One could reject Adrienne's insight as too simplistic and anthropomorphic. However, to do so would be to overlook the main point that the God of Creation is not a distant God who remains unmoved by man's actions. In Adrienne's commentary, one senses a God of great compassion and closeness to man.

³²Sc, 11-12.

³³Sc, 12: "Wenn der Sohn zur Erlösung der Welt Mensch werden wird, wird er der Welt den Geist des Vaters und seinen eigenen Geist schenken, mit andern Worten: der Vater wird uns in diesem Geist als seine Söhne neu zeugen, und so kann die Welt zum Vater zurückkehren, als geschaffene Welt im Heiligen Geist an der Zeugung des Sohnes teilnehmend."

the incarnate Son, the created world is “held back” into the begetting.³⁴

2.3 *Das Hohelied*

In *Das Hohelied* [*The Song of Songs*], Adrienne comments on the relationships between man and woman and Christ and the Church in the light of the Incarnation and Redemption. In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar underlines that it is necessary, today more than ever, to come to a deeper understanding of the nuptial mystery between Christ and the Church:

The love of Christ, from whose fruitfulness and abundance the Church comes forth, and the Church’s mutual love is in its innermost, perfect, ‘unblemished’ reality ‘without spot or wrinkle’ (Eph 5,27): here the Church (in Mary) is precisely what she ought to be: perfectly virginal, given over [*hingegen*], maternally fruitful. She lives up to every expectation of the Bridegroom. And this Church already has the experience of his perfect love. Where, however, the Church is sinful in her members, she lags behind his demand. She must be nurtured, chastened and humbled. She must feel the Master’s unrelenting hand-- because it is loving--upon her. Nevertheless, there are not two different Churches, but only one.

Nothing could be more contemporary than the deepening of this nuptial mystery [*Hochzeitlichkeit*] between Christ and the Church; an effective reform of the Church can arise solely from this mystery, and not from changes in traditional structures.³⁵

Von Balthasar notes that Adrienne comments on the mystery of the Christ-Church relationship with an “intensity, fearlessness and sober objectiveness” that “one looks for in vain in the countless commentaries of Tradition.”³⁶

In *Das Hohelied*, not only does Adrienne describe the Christ-Church (Bridegroom-Bride) relationship, but also she comments on the man-woman (bridegroom-bride) relationship.³⁷ In the same way that she examines Christ and his Church concretely and soberly, Adrienne notes the attributes of the bridegroom and the bride in their own palpability. We treat the bridegroom-bride/man-woman relationship in the first section and

³⁴It is not clear exactly what it means for the world to be “held back” into the eternal begetting of the Son. In any case, it is a participation in God that surpasses paradisaical participation in God. With Redemption, man participates in a more profound way in trinitarian life. The redeemed Christian no longer merely participates in trinitarian prayer, but he prays with Christ to the Father in Holy Mass and receives Christ’s Body and Blood.

³⁵H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Das Hohelied*, 5.

³⁶H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Das Hohelied*, 6.

³⁷Although *The Jerusalem Bible* refers to the interlocutors in *The Song of Songs* as “Bridegroom” and “Bride,” Adrienne uses the terms “bridegroom” (*Bräutigam*), “bride” (*Braut*), “man” (*Mann*) and “woman” (*Frau*) in her commentary. She uses *Bräutigam* and *Braut* to refer in a specific way to the relationship between the two interlocutors. On the other hand, she adopts the terms *Mann* and *Frau* when she wants to bring the relationship of the bridegroom and bride into the more general sphere of the relationship between man and woman. At other times, Adrienne uses simply “he” (*er*) and “she” (*sie*). I remain faithful to Adrienne’s usage and distinction in my presentation. However, when *er* and *sie* are used, I look to the context of the commentary in order to translate them either as “bridegroom/bride” or as “man/woman.”

the Christ-Church/Bridegroom-Bride relationship in the second section.

2.3.1 The Bridegroom and the Bride

In Adrienne's commentary on the dialogue between the bridegroom and bride, there are a number of attributes particular to each. The bridegroom is revealing, beautiful, sensitive, thankful, mature and fruitful. The bride is receptive, beautiful, hidden, mysterious, fearful, fruitful and virtuous. The reader notes immediately how the bridegroom often calls forth certain attributes of the bride and vice versa. Therefore, rather than describing each separately, we will treat the bridegroom and bride together. At the same time, we will indicate each one's particular attributes with *italics* as they arise within the context of the commentary.

Adrienne explains that in providing shade and fruit for the bride,³⁸ the bridegroom invitingly calls forth her *receptivity*. Precisely at this moment when the bridegroom *reveals* the splendor of his *beauty*, the bride does not stop to think what she can give him in order to thank him; she simply appreciates what she has gained through his gift.³⁹

However, whereas the bridegroom reveals his splendor, the bride's *beauty* remains somewhat *hidden* and *mysterious*. Adrienne exemplifies this by interpreting the bridegroom's call to the hidden bride⁴⁰ in the light of the conjugal act:

He calls her out of her hiding place almost as if she were unknown to him. It is in conformity with the bodily state of man and woman, that the man seeks what is hidden in the woman and himself gives that which is revealed [*das Offenbare*]. Thus, from the beginning, the bride can call on the bridegroom as the revealed one [*als den Offenbaren*]. He, however, cannot honor her in a greater way than by characterizing their next union as the first one. She remains for him the hidden one. When she has an experience of him, then, to be sure, he also has an experience of her. The relationship is mutual. But while he praises her as the hidden one, he gives her to understand that he is ready to begin wholly anew with her. He has forgotten the humility that she was 'opened' by him. She is again intact; for him she is a virgin every time.⁴¹

Thus, the bridegroom is revealed; the bride remains hidden. Although the bridegroom calls the bride out of her hiding place, she remains "virginal" in the sense that her hiddenness is discreetly preserved by the bridegroom.

Moreover, the bride's love for the bridegroom is marked by a certain *fearfulness*. Adrienne states that the bride cannot imagine the most beautiful encounter of their love

³⁸Cf. Sg 2,3: "As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

³⁹HL, 18.

⁴⁰Cf. Sg 2, 14: "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is comely."

⁴¹HL, 24-25.

without feeling a certain amount of anxiousness.⁴² Now that she is in full bloom, she pleads to the bridegroom that he drive away the *foxes* that represent a danger to their love. Nonetheless, the bride reaffirms that she belongs to her lover and he to her; she praises him again. Herein lies the irrevocability of belonging to each other even in the midst of something that may threaten their love.⁴³

Although a slight element of fear may underlie the bride's love, the bridegroom is *sensitive* and *thankful* towards her. When the bridegroom invites the bride to his garden,⁴⁴ Adrienne returns to the realm of the conjugal act:

In the beginning is the conjugal act itself; then the whole love play unfolds. The bridegroom goes right to the most important thing: to pick the myrrh in order to develop everything else from there. The bride ought to know that he wants to possess her fully, but that this possession does not make him insensitive to her other charms. He demands everything; everything in one. Nothing shall remain untasted; he is responsive to and thankful for everything. But he demands it as that which belongs to him. And he will take everything that she offers him. Basically, the woman has more pleasure in everything else, while the man is more situated on the conjugal act itself. However, because he really loves her, he will not force her into the conjugal act without foreplay [*Vorspiel*]. And because she really loves him, she will not want to stop with the foreplay, but will go to the point of complete giving over [*Hingabe*].⁴⁵

Therefore, in his love for the bride, the bridegroom encounters her precisely where she abides. In his self-giving, he must be aware and considerate of the manner in which the bride gives of herself. In his demand, he cannot forget the unique nature of her response.

In the dialogue between the bridegroom and bride, Adrienne also perceives the growth in maturity that occurs during the time of engagement and that comes to fruition on the wedding night. When the bride goes to welcome the bridegroom,⁴⁶ Adrienne likens this to the time of betrothal and engagement when the already *matured* man makes concessions to the yet child-like woman. He does not leave her behind, hurrying her along before she is ready. When love develops in the right way, the woman arrives at the state of *fruitfulness* on the wedding night. She has grown up in the arms of the man. On the wedding night, the man reveals his character, his understanding of the world and his life in general in a spiritual, instinctive and psychological way in the conjugal act even though these things may seem to have little to do with it. As a result, the woman acknowledges the man. She is made ready for him. A type of contemplation, peace and calmness characterize their

⁴²Cf. *Sg* 2,15-17: "Catch us the little foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom. My beloved is mine and I am his, he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle, or a young stag upon rugged mountains."

⁴³*Hl*, 26.

⁴⁴Cf. *Sg* 5, 1: "I come to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk."

⁴⁵*Hl*, 51-52.

⁴⁶Cf. *Sg* 5, 3-6: "I had put off my garment, how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet, how could I soil them? My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt."

union.⁴⁷

Adrienne addresses the *fruitfulness* of the union between bride and bridegroom, contemplating the images of spring and rebirth.⁴⁸ She notes how in the preceding verses, the bride mentions her fruitfulness in a more particular and specific way. The bridegroom remains more discreet, only discussing his fecundity in a general way. Because she must first be pregnant before he can experience something of his fruitfulness, he experiences the fruitfulness of the conjugal act after her. On the one hand, because the bride experiences fruitfulness already before the conjugal act, she yearns more for the promise of the bridegroom's love.⁴⁹ On the other hand, because the bridegroom must wait for his fruitfulness to be revealed in her pregnancy, he desires more the fulfillment of her love.⁵⁰

Moreover, Adrienne notes that the bridegroom's love awakens the bride's fruitfulness. When the bridegroom compares the bride's teeth to a *flock of shorn ewes*,⁵¹ Adrienne writes that he desires to awaken the woman's yearning for children. In praising the bride's *breasts*,⁵² the bridegroom praises her fruitfulness that is hidden in her and yet revealed by his love.⁵³

When the bridegroom compares the bride's neck to the *tower of David*,⁵⁴ Adrienne interprets this as a praise of her *virtuousness*.

The *tower of David* is virtue. It is reinforced, armed. She will belong only to him, she will know to defend herself. She is not only beautiful, but also virtuous. [...] The virtue of the woman is something other than that of the virgin. The bridegroom has a right to the woman and her virtue, and with this praise he intimates again his right to her and, at the same time, her duty to defend herself against other men.⁵⁵

Therefore, on her part, the bride, by defending her virtue, reinforces her faithfulness to the bridegroom. On his part, in his faithfulness to the bride, the bridegroom reminds her of the beauty of her virtue and the importance of defending it.

⁴⁷Cf. *HI*, 56-57.

⁴⁸Cf. *Sg* 2, 10-13: "My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance.'"

⁴⁹A. does not clarify here how the bride experiences her fruitfulness prior to the conjugal act. In other places, she notes that the woman experiences her fruitfulness in her menstrual cycle.

⁵⁰Cf. *HI*, 24.

⁵¹Cf. *Sg* 4, 2: "Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them is bereaved."

⁵²Cf. *Sg* 4, 5: "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies."

⁵³Cf. *HI*, 41.

⁵⁴Cf. *Sg* 4, 4: "Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an arsenal, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors."

⁵⁵*HI*, 41-42.

When the bride invites the bridegroom *to go forth into the fields*,⁵⁶ Adrienne underscores how everything in their relationship is seen in the light of future fruitfulness. It is as if the bride is already pregnant. The bridegroom has already compared her to a *vine* and a *pomegranate*. Now, they want to go together to see if the fruit has begun to bloom. Only then does she desire to belong to him. It is as if the fruitfulness, that was always there, is contemplated anew and in this contemplation it flows into a new, more promising fruitfulness. Adrienne observes: “She gives him not only what she already possesses, but also the whole promise of *vine* shoots, of the flowering *buds*. They would not go to contemplate the fruitfulness together, only to be disappointed and be forced to say: ‘No it does not bloom.’”⁵⁷ Thus, by giving herself over completely to the bridegroom, the bride makes it possible that their union may be blessed by much fruitfulness. Conversely, if she or he were to hold back, their fruitfulness would be diminished.

Commenting on the birth pangs of the bride’s mother,⁵⁸ Adrienne reminds the reader that the fruitfulness of man and woman always carries with it a reminder of the presence of suffering:

On the other hand, the bride is bound to the bridegroom’s fruitfulness; anywhere she turns, she runs up against this fruitfulness. By now it has a certain hardness: she will not escape. Not only that, but fruitfulness is bound to the apple tree in the sense of the experience of pain: *there she who bore you was in travail*. Further the bride will be joined to the chain of women who give birth in pain: since the episode with the tree, fruitfulness is tied to sorrow. Every woman gives birth under the apple tree and under its law. [...] It is the responsibility of the man to recall: the apple tree is there. To be fruitful is beautiful, but through the man, the bride finds out that it is also painful.⁵⁹

Adrienne, thus, interprets this passage in the light of man’s fall into sin. Because Adam and Eve sinned, God linked parturition forever with pain.⁶⁰ The man reminds the woman of the

⁵⁶Cf. *Sg* 7, 11-12: “Come my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards, and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.”

⁵⁷*HI*, 78.

⁵⁸Cf. *Sg* 8, 5b: “Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in travail with you, there she who bore you was in travail.”

⁵⁹*HI*, 86-87.

⁶⁰Cf. *Gn* 3, 16: “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’” Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, Volume VI: Theology: The Old Covenant* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), transl. Brian McNeil, C.R.V. and Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. John Riches, 130-137. Von Balthasar’s interpretation of the *Song of Songs* contrasts with Adrienne’s. He notes that God, marriage, children and sin are not mentioned by the author. Death is spoken of, but only by way of contrast. According to von Balthasar, this book is mainly a celebration of *eros*: “Eros is the sense-related, airborne, intoxicated condition whereby two persons exist for one another and with one another...” While, von Balthasar makes these affirmations in *The Glory of the Lord*, he remains open to other interpretations, as we have seen in his *Foreword to HI*. Adrienne contemplates the *Song of Songs* from the point of view of creation, sin, the Incarnation and Redemption, therefore, she sees many connections between the bride-bridegroom relationship and the Christ-Church relationship. Is it valid to view *Sg* as Adrienne does? Although modern exegetes may

connection between fruitfulness and pain, while the woman bears the pain of their fruitfulness.

2.3.2 Christ and the Church

On another level, Adrienne's commentary on *The Song of Songs* describes the relationship between Christ, the Bridegroom and the Church, his Bride. In *Das Hohelied*, several themes emerge: the mutual love between Christ and the Church; the Eucharist; the "confessional" nature of the Church; the participation of Mary and the Church in the Lord's love, mission and suffering; and how the Church faces attacks from within and without.

Commenting on the passage where the bride observes the bridegroom *bounding over the hills*,⁶¹ Adrienne notes that the mutual love between Christ and the Church is characterized by the perfect love of the Lord and the evident imperfection of the Church's members. Drawing from the wellspring of trinitarian love, the Lord, the Bridegroom constantly courts the Church, the Bride. But he stops short of her and remains *gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice*. Adrienne observes that the gazelle resembles the Lord who differentiates his acts from those of the Church. Sadly, man's sinfulness stands in the way of the Church being able to fully and completely give Christ to others. Adrienne explains that between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit everything is always fulfilled simultaneously through action and contemplation. But between the Lord and the Church, action and contemplation remain distinguished.⁶² Therefore, although the Lord and the Church enjoy a mutual love, the sinfulness of the Church's members will always be an obstacle to the Church being able to present Christ in his fullness. Furthermore, the mutual love between the Lord and the Church is characterized by hiddenness and mysteriousness on the part of the Church. Just as the bride stands hidden before the bridegroom and he in turn guards her hiddenness and mysteriousness,⁶³ so too the Church stands veiled before the Lord. Only the Lord knows all of the Church's mysteries. Consequently, the Church should entrust herself to him in everything.⁶⁴

Entrusting herself to the Lord, the Church allows herself to be defined by his Eucharist. Adrienne points out that the Eucharist is a mystical wedding between the Lord and the Church wherein the Lord gives over to her all his substance. In a similar way, when the conjugal act is carried out in God, a tremendous, impressionable power is bestowed on the man. If the Church, in her totality and in her members, were to receive Holy Communion in the same way that the Lord gives himself completely over to her, then she could allow herself to be fully molded by the Lord.⁶⁵ The Lord leads men to the Church and

frown on her commentary and reject it, she brings a Catholic understanding to the text, that views the Old Covenant as fulfilled in the New. The most profound significance of the Old Covenant is found in a "looking backward" from the New.

⁶¹Cf. *Sg* 2, 8-9: "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle, or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice."

⁶²Cf. *HI*, 21-22.

⁶³Cf. *Sg* 2, 14: "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is comely."

⁶⁴Cf. *HI*, 41.

⁶⁵Cf. *HI*, 42-43.

gives her the fructifying source, the sacraments. However, the Church has to lead men to the Lord in a faith that is always more fruitful.⁶⁶

Yet, the fruitfulness and faithfulness of the Church are grounded in her “confessional” nature. The Church “confesses” to the Lord when she receives his Eucharistic body without trying to hide her imperfections. Likewise, in the sacrament of confession, the penitent gives himself over without reserve to the priest confessor, who represents Christ. In this regard, Adrienne draws an analogy between confession and the conjugal act. She notes that the woman makes a type of “confession” to the man as she gives herself over to him without reserve, just as the penitent before the priest confessor. When the conjugal act is carried out in true love, then it is also a complete giving over of the man.⁶⁷

Sometimes the Church does not stand fully transparent before the Lord as is evident in the bride’s words: *I am swarthy*.⁶⁸ In the bride’s confessional attitude, too much self-forgiveness is evident. The Church is to stand in full nakedness before the Lord so that he can test and observe her. Or she makes her own genuine examination of conscience. But in this passage, *I am dark but comely*, the bride seems to be saying: “I am naked, but I cover myself up.” She acknowledges her mistakes, but complains that there were extenuating circumstances. Her confession is incomplete.⁶⁹

However, when the Church does confess her errors without holding back, the Lord asks her to participate in his Cross. Commenting on the passage where the bridegroom invites the bride to come down from *Lebanon*,⁷⁰ Adrienne points out that the Lord invites the Church to continuously descend to him to participate in the humiliation of the Cross and in his Eucharist. Only through humbling herself can the Church dispose herself to be fully possessed by the Lord’s love.⁷¹

If the Church does wrong in her members, the Lord forgives her. But he demands from them utmost obedience. Referring to *Sg* 7, 2-6,⁷² Adrienne explains:

⁶⁶Cf. *HI*, 49.

⁶⁷Cf. *HI*, 43-44.

⁶⁸Cf. *Sg* 1, 5-6: “I am very dark, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not gaze at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has scorched me. My mother’s sons were angry with me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard I have not kept!” Adrienne here must be speaking of the Church in her members. To be sure, there are countless examples of those in the Church who have not been completely “transparent” before the Lord. For example, dissenting theologians who choose to go to the media to publicize their discontent, rather than choosing to go first to the Church in a spirit of reconciliation.

⁶⁹Cf. *HI*, 9-10.

⁷⁰Cf. *Sg* 4, 8a: “Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon.”

⁷¹*HI*, 47. Cf. *HI*, 29: “Ist die Braut die Kirche, so ist es selbstverständlich, daß sie sich demütigen muß, um den Herrn bei sich zu haben. Wenn er fern ist, liegt der Fehler offensichtlich auf ihrer Seite, sie hat sich entfremdet. Sie muß das Irren durch die Nacht auf sich nehmen, bis sie den Herrn wieder hat. [...] Sie muß sich an ihn klammern, um nicht mehr zu irren.”

⁷²Cf. *Sg* 7, 2-6: “Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus. Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses. How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, delectable maiden!”

Now [the Lord] puts the emphasis on the sacrament; first of all, he demands the full, unconditional binding so emphatically that everything else seems to recede into second place. It is as if the womb of the Church were to him her font, the only essential reality. He allows the Church her other beauty, also her particular forms of devotion, but only after he has first ensured expressly that the seasoned wine is always present, that she is always ready to be perfectly obedient to him and to expect him constantly.⁷³

With this, Adrienne emphasizes the sacramental power of the sacrament of the confession over other forms of worship. A believer is formed through the sacraments of Eucharist and confession. Other forms of prayer supplement the sacramental life. Moreover, sincere confession must be permeated by a Marian obedience and trust in the Lord. The Church can never forget that she was ultimately “conceived” in Mary’s womb.

2.3.3 Christ and Mary-Church

In *Das Hohelied*, Adrienne contemplates how the Virgin Mary embodies the Church in such a way that both the Church and Mary are “perfectly virginal, given over, maternally fruitful.”⁷⁴ By linking Mary and the Church, Adrienne follows a tradition that stems from the very first centuries of Christians who always thought of the Church as a woman, as *Mater Ecclesia*, *Sponsa Christi*. Many Church Fathers and theologians of the Middle Ages saw the Church so closely united with Mary to the point where they were often considered almost identical.⁷⁵ Adrienne shows how the Church, embodied in Mary, is *born in love*, how the Church, like Mary, sometimes *must abide in incomplete understanding* of the Lord and his mission and how the Lord, Mary and the Church all stand under the *law of suffering and fruitfulness*.

When the bride asks the bridegroom: *where [do] you pasture your flock?*,⁷⁶ Adrienne explains how the Church already in the womb of Mary experiences the profound love of God. Nurtured and brought forth in the Virgin Mother’s love for the Son of God, the Church lives forth from this first experience of love. Already in the incarnate Son, the Church exists in a seminal way, in such a way that Adrienne can write that the Church exists, even though she is yet to be founded. Indeed, the Church is so grounded in love and loves her members so much, that this love surpasses the love between a child and his parents.⁷⁷

⁷³HI, 75-76.

⁷⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Das Hohelied*, 5.

⁷⁵Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, “Ein Wort zu *Humanae Vitae*,” 120-121. [210-211].

⁷⁶Cf. *Sg* 1, 7: “Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who wanders beside the flocks of your companions?”

⁷⁷Cf. HI, 11: “Wahrscheinlich ist das Entstehen der Kirche so sehr in der Liebe begründet, daß ihr erstes Erwachen schon eine Leibese Erfahrung ist (Maria). Der einzelne Glaubende muß in die Liebe hineinwachsen, um einen Begriff von ihr zu erhalten. Wenn ein Mensch in der Liebe von Vater und Mutter gezeugt wird, kann er nicht sagen, er habe eine Erfahrung dieser Liebe.” Certainly, the love that God has for the Church is preeminent and eternal. But the Church is made incarnate through Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary. In this way, Adrienne can say that the Church’s first “incarnate” experience of love is in the womb of the Virgin Mother.

Living in the Lord's love, however, means the Church must sometimes abide in an incomplete understanding of the Lord and his mission, just as Mary did not understand completely everything her Son did. In the passage where the bride seeks out the bridegroom,⁷⁸ Adrienne sees the image of Mary looking for the twelve-year-old Jesus in the figure of the bride who seeks her beloved. In fact, Mary's life was marked by different moments of misunderstanding the mission of her Son and understanding again. Adrienne states: "When Mary becomes Bride and Church of the Son, her life resembles a losing and a finding again of the Son in an alternating rhythm."⁷⁹ One can see this rhythm played out when Mary "loses" the twelve-year-old Jesus and "finds" him later at the wedding feast at Cana and at the Cross. In not understanding everything, Mary and the Church allow the Lord to lead them deeper into his love. Adrienne also notes how the Lord, Mary and the Church all stand under the law of suffering and fruitfulness:

And if the Lord is now the Son of his Mother and the Church her daughter, then both stand under the law of labor pains, that the Mother knew also. As Son of this Mother, the Lord places himself under this law: fruitfulness and suffering tied together. In order to redeem mankind, he has taken up the human law of atonement [*Sühne*] into the divine law. From the beginning, as a gift of grace, God the Father had attached an atoning [*sühnenden*] character to labor pains. And since the Son gave them a divine importance, his atonement could prevail over the sins of the world. [...] He, himself, took on the most essential burden of atonement on the Cross. But in that he has left a space for the pain of atonement of the child-bearing woman: he allows himself to become man through his Mother and through her pains, in order to receive a part in the sufferings of men...⁸⁰

The Lord "placed his all-atoning cross under the tree and awoke the Church and gave her a part in the birthing pains of the world. She will no longer be able to distance herself from the moment of her having been awoken by the word of the Lord."⁸¹ Therefore, although Mary is the Immaculate Mother of the Church and thus sinless, she suffers on the Church's behalf. In this way, her suffering can be considered a following of Christ who suffers on man's behalf even though he is sinless.

2.3.4 Attacks on the Church from Within and Without

The Church must strive to protect herself from attacks from within. Just as the union of the bridegroom and bride must be preserved from internal forces that threaten their relationship, so too the Church must guard against those forces that attempt to divide her

⁷⁸Cf. *Sg* 3, 1-4: "Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. 'I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me, as they went about in the city. 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?' Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me."

⁷⁹*HL*, 30-31.

⁸⁰*HL*, 88.

⁸¹*HL*, 87.

from within. In the *waters* and *floods* that may threaten the love between the bridegroom and bride,⁸² Adrienne perceives the schisms and the movements of falling away that attempt to dissolve the Church from within. In the Church, love must form her innermost life. The *floods* try to endanger her as institution, but they do not succeed because in her essence the Church is love, not institution. The *floods* are of this world,⁸³ but the Lord formed the Church in eternity. Sometimes, however, she desires to be temporal. Still the Lord does everything to keep her away from threats.⁸⁴ Another danger from within occurs when the Church tries to “capture” the Lord. She can be tempted to convince herself that she is sure of the Lord, that she knows everything about him.⁸⁵ In the face of all these threats from within, the Church must remain fixed on the Lord. If she loses sight of him, she risks turmoil from within.⁸⁶ The Church must also withstand attacks from without. To do this, the Church “should not think of everyone as authorized to improve her. Only out of inner love between her and the Lord can she currently be helped.”⁸⁷ Moreover, she maintains a relationship to those who stand outside her union with Christ. When the Church explains her Bridegroom to them, she cannot remain on a general, superficial level, but she must be able to articulate her inner mystery to outsiders. However, grasping the mystery of the Christ-Church relationship from the outside remains most difficult.⁸⁸

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined two commentaries: *Die Schöpfung* and *Das Hohelied*. Contemplating the paradisaal state in *Die Schöpfung*, Adrienne paints a picture of man and woman living harmoniously with God. The man-woman relationship is characterized by innocence and total self-giving. Adam and Eve cooperate in a *fruitfulness of the spirit* that serves as the foundation and source of their *bodily fruitfulness*. Moreover, in paradise, man and woman live from the unity between the divine Persons and are nurtured by their *participation in trinitarian prayer*. Nonetheless, God in his goodness and wisdom knows the precariousness of the paradisaal state. He has gifted man with the freedom to love him, but man can use that same freedom to disobey God. Adrienne describes how the eternally begotten Son accompanies man and woman with concern to the point that he

⁸²Cf. Sg 8, 6-7: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.”

⁸³Cf. Hl, 93-94.

⁸⁴Cf. Hl, 21.

⁸⁵Cf. Hl, 27.

⁸⁶The passage of Peter walking on the water towards Jesus comes to mind (Mt 14, 22-33). Peter, leader and representative of the Church, begins to walk on the water towards Jesus. But as soon as he begins to think about the wind, rather than remaining fixed on the Lord, he becomes fearful and begins to sink.

⁸⁷Hl, 84.

⁸⁸Cf. Hl, 65. Adrienne does not provide details regarding how the Church is to articulate her inner mysteries to outsiders. When she notes that the Church “cannot remain on a superficial level,” perhaps she is referring to the importance of highlighting the distinctiveness of the one, true Catholic faith. Certainly, in ecumenical dialogue it is good to underscore similarities between faiths, however, in doing so the distinctive, basic beliefs of the faith cannot be compromised. For those who stand outside the Catholic faith, it can be difficult to grasp a particular belief such as the Real Presence.

actually has his first human experience in the sin of Adam. With their sin, the first man and woman bar themselves from paradise. They lose their innocence and rob themselves of intimate participation in trinitarian prayer. But God does not leave man and woman to exist in loneliness and despair. He gives them to each other, but in a new way. They are gifted with sexual fruitfulness that, nonetheless, has a certain bittersweet nature: the woman will give birth in pain and suffering; the man will labor for his food and shelter. The unity between fruitfulness and suffering, that comes about as a result of sin, serves as a foreshadowing of the Redemption of the Cross. In Chapter 8, we will return to our consideration of the paradisaical state in our treatment of *Theologie der Geschlechter*.

In *Das Hohelied*, Adrienne alternately interprets the dialogue between the protagonists in *The Song of Songs* as an animated conversation between bridegroom and bride and Christ and the Church. In the ongoing song of the bridegroom and the bride, the reader is introduced to the particular roles and attributes of each. The bridegroom, in his role as initiator and revealer, calls forth the bride in her mysterious hiddenness and receptivity. In her meditations, Adrienne emphasizes the fruitfulness of the bride and the demand of the bridegroom. Not shying away from the sexual sphere, Adrienne underscores the purity and innocence of conjugal love. Although man and woman no longer live in paradise, their love still bears traces of their lost innocence. The bridegroom calls the bride out of her hiding place, but still she retains her hiddenness, her virgin spirit.

Taking up the qualities of the bridegroom and bride, Adrienne applies them to Christ and the Church. On the one hand, the Church remains mysterious and veiled before the Lord. Nonetheless, she “confesses” herself to him so that he may know her intimately and form her. On the other hand, in giving himself in his Eucharist to the Church, the Lord invites her to give herself without reserve. Born in Marian love, the Church, especially in the person of Mary, participates in the Lord’s suffering. By purifying herself continuously, the Church, in her members, can always be a true witness to the mission of Christ, her Bridegroom.

In her meditations on the Christ-Church relationship, Adrienne offers an interpretation that is marked by its strong incarnational character. Encountering Adrienne’s commentary, one gains a new appreciation of the Christ-Church union. With the sacrament of marriage and regular reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and confession, Christian spouses are brought ever deeper into an understanding of their truly incarnational union with Christ and his Church.

Chapter Three: Marriage in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Mark

3.1 Introduction

We will now take up Adrienne's commentaries on relevant passages from two of the three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew and Mark. Although Adrienne did comment on some passages from the Gospel of Luke, they remained unpublished except for a few meditations presented in *Gleichnisse des Herrn* [*Parables of the Lord*]. We will carefully study two commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, *Bergpredigt* [*The Sermon on the Mount*] and *Passion von Innen* [*The Passion from Within*], that treat themes pertinent to any work on marriage: indissolubility, purity of heart, the bodiliness of Jesus, the Eucharist and the Christ-Church relationship. In addition, we will examine passages from *Markus*, Adrienne's commentary on the Gospel of Mark, that treats the themes of indissolubility and adultery. Firstly, we will consider *Bergpredigt*, secondly, *Passion von Innen* and thirdly, *Markus*.

3.2 Bergpredigt

In *Bergpredigt*, *Betrachtungen über Matthäus 5-7*¹ [*The Sermon of the Mount, Meditations on Matthew 5-7*], Adrienne gives a profound commentary on the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus preaches on the Beatitudes, gives new interpretations to several Old Covenant laws and teaches the disciples the *Our Father*. Within this context, Adrienne treats the themes of purity of heart and the indissolubility of marriage. Both themes emerge from a discourse where Jesus lovingly teaches his disciples and wants to share with them something of the love that he has for the Father and the Holy Spirit.

3.2.1 Purity of Heart

Contemplating purity of heart,² Adrienne explains that Jesus, who is *the* totally pure man, wants to affect in his brethren his same purity. Jesus desires that when his Father gazes upon the disciples, he recognizes them as his redeemed people. The Son cannot tolerate anything that obscures the visibility of the Father. Therefore, Jesus explains to the disciples how adultery can be committed in one's thought, not just in one's act. Essentially, he teaches the disciples how to see things as he does. They should view the world from the eyes of love, not from the eyes of a zealot. A pure heart, therefore, becomes a prerequisite

¹A. von Speyr, *Bergpredigt, Betrachtungen über Matthäus 5-7* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1948). Hereafter cited as *B*.

²Cf. *Mt* 5, 27-30: [Jesus said to his disciples:] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

for truly loving one's neighbor.³

Distinct from a type of mere human refinement, Jesus' purity is the purity of God, founded on his relationship with the Father. Adrienne observes: "Everything that is capable of good in us, he uses to form us and to allow his grace to work. [...] The Father is now, so to speak, spoiled by the Son: in the Son he has seen what a man can be, how he is capable of realizing God's most mysterious thoughts, intentions and desires. And he would like to be able to apply the Son's standard to the Christian."⁴ In the end, when a person harbors adulterous thoughts in his heart, he commits a two-fold disobedience. First, he opposes a categorical instruction of the Lord. Second, by withholding his good intention from the Lord, he does not give the Lord the opportunity to use this good intention to draw him and others closer to him. In other words, he "robs" [*beraubt*] the Lord of his good intention. He cannot enter into the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁵

Adrienne observes that if this commandment may appear difficult to the disciples, they need only remember that Jesus himself takes on the responsibility for this demand. He would not demand such difficult things without offering his saving grace at the same time. Far from binding us down, God's law frees. At the same time, he draws us into the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Unlike the Old Covenant where man simply did what was prescribed by God, now he takes part in God's intimate intentions and thoughts.⁶

Noting that the power of the Cross extends to the past, present and future, Adrienne interprets *Matthew* 5, 30b literally and concretely.⁷ Working backwards, the Cross gives past and present sinners the power to separate themselves from temptation. Working forwards, Jesus, on the Cross, bears the sins of all future believers so that they may avoid damnation. When Jesus descends into hell on Holy Saturday, he "sees everything there burning, everything that was torn from us: all sins, which through the power of his Cross he has separated from sinners, all 'members,' which are separated from the bodies they belonged to, so separated and burnt, that they have become unrecognizable."⁸

3.2.2 The Indissolubility of Marriage

Within a discourse on divorce in *Matthew* 5, 31-32, Jesus affirms the indissolubility of marriage.⁹ Adrienne notes that the Christ-Church relationship is the foundation of unity for all Christian marriages:

³Cf. *B*, 96-97. Desiring that the disciples be seen by the Father as his redeemed people, Jesus longs for the disciples to have the same transparency that he has towards the Father. At the same time, Jesus leads the way; he shows the disciples what it means to be transparent: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." *Jn* 14, 9.

⁴*B*, 98.

⁵Cf. *B*, 100.

⁶Cf. *B*, 97-98.

⁷Cf. *Mt* 5, 30b: "[It] is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body will go into hell."

⁸*B*, 101-102.

⁹Cf *Mt* 5, 31-32: [Jesus said to his disciples:] "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

The bond between man and woman in the sacrament of marriage in the New Covenant has become absolute and indissoluble through the bond of the Lord and the Church. The Church's continuation lies in the continuation of this eternal bond of the Lord with the Church. [...] In the Old Covenant marriage could or did not yet need to be indissoluble in this absolute sense. [...] He who leaves his wife, injures the eternal, divine bond as marriage is now included within the bond of Christ with his Church and is like a concretization, a realized form of this bond. [...] He who tears apart the unity of marriage, weakens in a definite sense the unity of Christ with his Church. And because a bond of marriage is also in connection with all other marriages in the Church, it also endangers those marriages: on the one hand, the unity is torn apart, and on the other, out of that torn unity the temptation exists to make the tear greater.¹⁰

Adrienne's statement that the divine covenant between Christ and the Church can be injured by divorce demands further explanation. In its divine nature, the unity between Christ and the Church remains unblemished. But in its humanity, that is, in the Church's members, division is sown. The Christ-Church union remains primary to the union between Christian spouses and is the source of their unity. But when Christian spouses spurn this gift of unity by contracting divorce, they sow confusion for other marriages.¹¹

Therefore, along with other Christian couples, one Christian couple bears a certain responsibility to live a faithful marriage. But this one Christian couple not only bears this responsibility *with* other Christian spouses, but also *for* them. Similar to the way the priest represents the whole Church and acts as vicar of Christ, the married person, whose marriage is ratified by entering into a sacramental union, stands on behalf of the whole married state. What the Christian spouse does within the state of marriage concerns the whole state and ultimately Christ, upon whom the Church is founded.¹²

3.3 *Passion von Innen*

In *Passion von Innen*¹³ [*Passion from Within*], Adrienne reflects on the body of Jesus, the Eucharist and the union of man and woman in the light of the Christ-Church relationship. Adrienne's meditations over the events of Jesus's Passion according to

¹⁰B, 103: "Wer seine Frau entläßt, verletzt die ewige, göttliche Bindung, denn die Ehe wird jetzt innerhalb des Bundes Christi mit seiner Kirche geschlossen und ist wie eine Konkretisierung, eine Verwicklungsform dieses Bundes."

¹¹In her wisdom, the Church does not allow divorced-remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist. The Eucharist embodies the unity between Christ and the Church. A divorced-remarried person who receives Communion contradicts this unity and creates confusion for the faithful. Cf. FC, 84: "They [divorced persons who have remarried] are unable to be admitted thereto [Eucharistic Communion] from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church that is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage."

¹²Cf. B, 103-104.

¹³A. von Speyr, *Passion von Innen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1981) Hereafter cited as *Pa. The Passion from Within* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), transl. Sister Lucia Wiedenhöver, O.C.D.

Matthew focus mainly on the interior states and experiences of Jesus. In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar clarifies that Adrienne's gift to reveal the interior state of a person was "not a question of 'empathy' or of psychologizing, but rather a 'being-admitted'." Her reflections, thus, "do not pander to curiosity but invite to meditation and adoration."¹⁴

Throughout her commentary, Adrienne treats the themes of the embodiment of the Word of God and of Jesus's emotions and experiences of his own body in new and varied ways. Her gift to characterize the body of Jesus in such a concrete or "incarnate" way comes more from her theological mission than from her experience as a medical doctor. Von Balthasar writes:

[Adrienne's concrete meditations on Jesus's body] are a result of the theological mission of taking seriously the bodiliness of the created human being in his relationship to God, since bodiliness is right in the center of the Incarnation, the Eucharist and the Resurrection. In this way, the necessary counterbalance is given to fend off the inclination of Neoplatonic hostility toward the body, an inclination that has been cultivated throughout the history of Christian mysticism, with very few exceptions (Hildegard!), whereby the more 'spiritual' an ecstasy is, the more valuable it is considered. This is not only specifically unchristian but it is also generally unbiblical, as one can see from the revelatory visions of the Old Testament that find their climax in the Apocalypse of the New Testament. Finally, in this, one has the connecting link with the early Christian tradition---Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasios.¹⁵

If bodiliness is at the heart of the Son's Incarnation, Eucharist and Resurrection, it is also at the heart of Adrienne von Speyr's writings, as noted in *Chapter One* (subsection 1.3.2). In *Passion von Innen*, the "bodiliness" of Jesus is developed by Adrienne on three levels when she explains that Jesus' body takes on a three-fold form that is incarnate, eucharistic and ecclesial.¹⁶ We therefore follow Adrienne's designations in the this three-part section.

3.3.1 The Incarnate Body of Christ

As Jesus approaches the final days and hours that precede the Cross, he knows that his time on earth is coming to an end. He must bid farewell to his body. This is a difficult task because Jesus loves his body. As he looks at his hands, his arms and legs, as he ponders his whole body, Jesus is aware that he loves his body not only because he received it from the Father, but also because his Mother formed it in her womb. Jesus's body has served him well to carry out his mission, but now he must begin to bid farewell to both his body and his present mission. Adrienne notes: "And as suffering and death are at odds with what he has begun, he takes no comfort in the thought that the presently occurring earthly breakup will be completed on an entirely different level precisely through suffering. He has the healthy limbs of a young man, and throughout his whole body he feels the unrelenting,

¹⁴H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Passion von Innen*, 7. [7].

¹⁵H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Passion von Innen*, 8. [8].

¹⁶Cf. *Pa*, 20. [24].

approaching death as the horror of pure contradiction.”¹⁷

Jesus must also take leave of human bonds. He thinks about leaving his Mother, John, his beloved disciple and all his followers who have come to believe in him. Jesus always loved those who came to him with full human affection. Adrienne emphasizes that Jesus has loved them with a childlike heart. Now he does not know exactly what to say to his loved ones in order to help them better understand something that is beyond complete understanding.¹⁸ Adrienne explains further:

The Lord not only takes leave of the things of this world, but also he begins to see them disappear one by one. His body, his whole humanity become distant to him in a completely new way to the point that his body itself seems completely strange to him. This new experience affects first of all, not his prayer and the comforting vision of the Father, but rather everything he thinks and feels as man. He feels John, whom he loves, to be distant, almost unwelcome and a nuisance because the disciple stands with the others ‘on the other side.’ He himself stands alone on the side of the Passion.¹⁹

Thus, Jesus bids farewell to his body and to his loved ones. Unexpectedly, Jesus even suffers estrangement from his Mother and John. Never before has he had to deal so strongly with the problem of human estrangement. It is as if the wires connecting his senses with the exterior world were cut off. Adrienne speaking of Jesus elaborates: “And still his bodily faculties are not yet dead. They are perhaps more consciously alive than before, because he sees that it is good and still could be good if their use would not be terminated.”²⁰

3.3.2 The Eucharistic Body of Christ

At the Last Supper when the Lord says the words, “This is my body. [...] This is my blood,” he stands ‘beside’ his body in a certain sense.²¹ At this moment, Jesus experiences an enormous transition that is fundamentally the weight of sacrifice:

As he becomes flesh, so now he becomes bread. And as he becomes bread, so he becomes Church. The three events are situated in a row and are comparable: in a becoming, the Son becomes flesh. In an assumption in which the transformation occurs, he becomes bread. And then he allows the Church to become his body in her own growth. He gives his body to the bread; he *allows* the Church to take his body and to become his body. His one body takes on a threefold [*dreiförmig*] form: as incarnate,

¹⁷*Pa*, 9-10. [11].

¹⁸*Cf. Pa*, 12. [14].

¹⁹*Pa*, 14. [17].

²⁰*Pa*, 15. [18-19].

²¹*Cf. Pa*, 20. [24]. *Cf. also Pa*, 100-101. [113]. Even though Jesus stands ‘beside’ his body, he remains united with his body, the Church: “Deshalb kann man die Kirche niemals völlig vom Herrn ablösen und ihm gegenüberstellen: sie bleibt sein Leib, obwohl sie seine Braut ist. Der Schlüssel, der dies erklärt, ist die Eucharistie. Er verströmt seinen Leib in der Eucharistie, um in der Sammlung des Verströmten zur Einheit die Kirche entstehen zu lassen. Er hat die Macht, seinen Leib hinzugeben ‘und ihn wieder zu nehmen.’ Aber das bleibt ein Geheimnis der Jungfräulichkeit; wie denn auch diesem Grunde die Priester jungfräulich sein sollen.”

eucharistic and ecclesial body.

And precisely now that the Son's earthly existence begins to become almost too difficult, he gives the character of timeless duration to his earthly body. Lying beside him, but containing him totally, this bread has become his body. The pronounced Word has been given to the Church. And in distributing the bread to her members, in multiplying his body, the Church will be formed into his body. There is this moment when the Son is strewn out in all directions, in a trinitarian form that he understands as corresponding to God as triune unity.²²

In the Eucharist, therefore, the Son "allows the Church to take his body and to become his body." Consequently, the Church and the Eucharist become the embodiment of the fruitfulness of the Son's sacrifice to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In short, the Church and the Eucharist are the concrete, bodily witnesses to trinitarian fruitfulness. Furthermore, it is the Eucharist which forms believers in the Church and which instills in them God's fruitfulness. The Son is "strewn out" and diffused, but those who partake of his Eucharist are united anew with God and each other.

Jesus gives his body to the Church before the Passion so that she can suffer along with him and participate in the Cross. In this way, far from remaining a completed and foregone reality, the Cross endures in the believer who receives the eucharistic Lord. Adrienne notes that the Lord gives over his whole divinity into the bread so that he can suffer completely as man. Jesus will die alone and estranged from his Mother, his apostles, from everyone, but he wants them to have his Body and Blood to remind them of his presence in their lives.²³

Adrienne observes that when Jesus institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist, he feels as if all his strength had been emptied out of his body. Indeed, it feels as if he has emptied himself of all his senses and all coordination between his divinity and humanity. Jesus feels as he did when the power went out of him when he cured the woman with the hemorrhage.²⁴ In this case, however, in making the bread his body, Jesus empties all his strength into the bread.²⁵ But Jesus is not split between two bodies:

He does not have a double sense of his own body just as he would not have such a double sense in the Father: one in himself and one in the Father. Nonetheless, keeping in mind that this is included in the commandment of loving one's neighbor: Jesus, knowing that his body is in this bread, there is something like a continuation of his eucharistic body into his incarnational body. Thus he achieves the full unity between the two forms of being body.²⁶

Therefore, even though Jesus takes leave of his body, Adrienne emphasizes that there is "something like" a continuation of his eucharistic body into his incarnational body. Jesus

²²Cf. *Pa*, 20-21. [24-25].

²³Cf. *Pa*, 24-25. [29-30].

²⁴Cf. *Mk* 5, 30.

²⁵Cf. *Pa*, 31. [35].

²⁶*Pa*, 33. [37].

unites the two forms of body in himself.

3.3.3 The Ecclesial Body of Christ

As Jesus nears his death, he draws closer to that moment when the Church will be born from his side. Adrienne views this approaching, culminating event in the light of Christ's relationship to his Church. Turning to metaphors from the marriage relationship, she explains how the *Church allows herself to be formed by Christ* and how there is a certain *complementarity between Christ and his Church*.

Contemplating Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Adrienne explains how *the Lord forms the Church* through her obedient following. When Jesus is arrested, Peter draws his sword to defend him. Adrienne compares the actions of Peter, who represents the Church, to those of an anxious bride-to-be. The engaged bride may have many good proposals concerning the wedding and other things, yet the bridegroom is to be the leader. He begs his bride to leave everything to him. Likewise, in drawing his sword, Peter has good intentions, but he is not acting in accordance with the intentions of Jesus, the Bridegroom. He should allow the Lord to lead him. Adrienne concludes: "Much of what the Church does, need not be objectively wrong. But something is subjectively false when she thinks, resolves and disposes on her own impulse."²⁷ In other words, in obeying Christ, her founder and Bridegroom, the Church allows herself to be led by the Holy Spirit. But if she spurns the Holy Spirit, the Church is in danger of making errors and false judgements. Later when he flees from Jesus, Peter affects certain changes in himself and as well as in Jesus. Speaking of Peter and Jesus, Adrienne observes:

A bond and an attraction exist between him and the Lord. Already, as he is fleeing, he resolves to look anew after the Lord. Fleeing, he follows the course that the Lord has already taken up. Spiritually, he has said No to him. Bodily, he follows him from a distance. He resembles a pregnant woman who has a bodily relationship to a man that others do not have. The office he has received is "body" that is somehow independent of his attitude of spirit.²⁸

Peter follows after the Lord, but later denies him. Immediately, Jesus senses the denial in his body; he feels Peter's body grow cold and stiff. It is as if through his denial, Peter no longer belongs to Jesus. Jesus resembles a divorced man who meets up again with his wife after many years. He knows every secret of her body, but she no longer belongs to him. He once knew her so well, but now he does not know her at all.²⁹

Drawing from the image of betrothal, Adrienne underlines the *complementarity between Christ and the Church*. She explains that the Lord's "betrothal" to the Church lasted for the three years of his public life. Marriage then took place on the Cross and in the

²⁷Pa, 79. [90].

²⁸Pa, 83. [94].

²⁹Cf. Pa, 95. [107]. To compare Jesus to a divorced man may provoke a reaction of surprise, even shock on the part of the reader. However, it is important to bear in mind that it is an analogy. Certainly, Jesus is not an unfaithful, divorced husband. But as Jesus nears the Cross, he becomes estranged from those around him similar to the estrangement that occurs between divorced spouses. At the same time, the Lord grows closer to the sinners whom he is to save.

Resurrection. Just as the bridegroom considers his bride's suggestions during the time of betrothal, so too the Lord received inspirations from his disciples during the three years they spent together. The Bridegroom accepts the Bride's thoughts and ideas, but she may not recognize them later as coming from her.³⁰ In other words, the Bridegroom listens to the Bride, but the Bride still allows the Bridegroom to lead her. To illustrate this, Adrienne contemplates an encounter between the Lord and Peter after the Cross. When Jesus definitively appoints Peter as shepherd of his lambs,³¹ Peter has forgotten his sword brandishing and betrayals:

[Peter] will no longer recognize his promptings [to the Lord] in the office entrusted to him. Neither does he see his betrayals and his indiscretions with the sword. He sees only the pure gift of the Lord, even though various aspects of this gift will *rest* on the fact that he [Peter] has once betrayed [Jesus], that he wanted to be washed all over, that he drew the sword, that he went fishing with his companions without catching anything, until the Lord came...When the Lord forms, he does not use positive promptings; instead he uncovers weaknesses. For in his eternal conversation with the Church, in forming her, he cannot only take note of what he himself wants but he has to adapt himself to the situation caused in the Church by men's failures.³²

Christ, then, forms the Church with his transforming love. When the weaknesses of the Church's members surface, he uses them to form her further. Only by giving herself over to the Lord, in "confessing herself" to the Lord, as was demonstrated above (subsection 2.3.2), the Church (all her members) allows herself to be formed in the Lord's prodigal love.

3.3.4 The Church as Fruit of the Son's Suffering

Contemplating the roles that *fruitfulness* and *suffering* play in the birth of the Church, Adrienne again turns to the man-woman relationship in marriage. Considering *fruitfulness*, she draws a unique analogy between the conjugal act and the act of "begetting" the Church:

The seed, that the man gives over to the woman, he has gathered together with her in view. Somehow, he has also gathered it from a woman, for he is born of a woman. This is especially true of Mary, who is first virgin Mother and then Bride. She forms the incarnate Son from her organs. And what he has received from her, he passes on to the Church in his disciples. It is also possible that the man who beholds the woman to whom he will soon give his seed, has more seed to give than if he had not been occupied with her. In this way the woman helps him to form his seed. The Lord also is much occupied with his Church and with the manner in which she could be made fruitful. And the manifold weaknesses of his disciples

³⁰Cf. *Pa*, 80. [90].

³¹Cf. *Jn* 21, 15-19.

³²*Pa*, 80-81. [90-91].

increase the Lord's capacity to take on the Cross.³³

In other words, the Lord has his apostles in view when he forms the Church. He knows their weaknesses will make his mission more difficult. Nevertheless, he gives himself over completely to them so that they may be fruitful.

Describing the *suffering* that the Lord endures on the Cross, Adrienne notes that it bears both a *feminine* and a *masculine* character. On the Cross, the Lord's suffering and pain have a *feminine* character in a way comparable to the pain of the mother who gives birth. She experiences much physical pain, but it is encompassed in the love for her husband and child. Thus, the woman in parturition imitates the Lord who suffers on the Cross and who allows his love to encompass the pain: "He places [the pain] in parentheses and subdues it in order to show his love and to satisfy the expectation of the disciples, who, at the moment his body becomes a body of pain, long for the Eucharist from him."³⁴

Adrienne underlines that not only is Christ's suffering on the Cross *similar to* painful birthing pangs, but also the Lord *gives meaning to* them. Adrienne adds: "To bring children into the world is fruitfulness. Redemption brings about even more fruitfulness. Both can be brought about only by a feminine self-giving in which love overcomes all suffering, pain and death. In a certain way the Lord suffers the Cross in place of Mary for woman."³⁵ Hence, the Lord gives birth to the Church on the Cross in pain and suffering thereby giving meaning to the pain experienced by all mothers who bring new life into the world. In the Lord's self-giving on the Cross, he takes on all suffering and death. It is both a receiving and a self-giving.

But the Lord's suffering on the Cross also assumes a *masculine* quality. Adrienne notes how Jesus's words on the Cross set in motion the begetting and giving birth of the Church:

On the Cross, fruitfulness comes about through pain. Every pain on the Cross is a birth pang and goes from the single aching body member to the center of painful parturition. The Lord does not beget the Church on the Cross, but he gives birth to her. Or better: begetting and giving birth come together. [...] The words of the Lord on the Cross are acts of absolute male begetting while the Holy Spirit is the great begetter. After giving his Spirit over into the Father's hand in death, the Son can only give birth. The power of begetting goes from the Son back to the Father: it is the Father who now begets with the word of the Son.³⁶

Therefore, although his "giving birth" is *feminine*, the words he speaks from the Cross are *masculine*. The Son hands his spirit back to the Father in an active (non-passive) way thus fulfilling the mission given to him by the Father.

In order to shed further light on the mystery of the Cross, Adrienne turns to the conjugal act to underline the connection between the Passion and fruitfulness. As Jesus gives himself completely over to his Bride, the Church, so too man and woman give

³³*Pa*, 78. [88].

³⁴*Pa*, 102-103. [115-116].

³⁵*Pa*, 103. [116].

³⁶*Pa*, 41-42. [46-47].

themselves over completely to each other. Adrienne elaborates:

In the fruitful, conjugal act, the man loses his substance and inflicts the pain of the coming birth on the woman. The man is exhausted, and the woman goes into labor. Everything seems to be negative. But if it is done in love, the pain is surpassed by joy. The man loses something in order to gain something back that is completely out of proportion with what he has given. Both will share the joys of being fruitful. Love transforms everything negative into something superabundantly positive.³⁷

Likewise, when the Son gives himself completely on the Cross, everything appears negative. The Lord has given his life over for no apparent reason. His followers only see his death and mourn his absence from their lives. That Jesus might rise from the dead does not even cross their minds. But God's love transforms the injustice, the loneliness and the suffering into something infinitely positive.

On the Cross, the Lord experiences firsthand how sin can distance one's body from the purpose for which it was created. On the one hand, he acknowledges and praises the body that his Father gave to Adam. He is cognizant of how well the body is made, structured and integrated in all its parts. On the other hand, in undergoing a complete experience of bodily pain, he sees how sin destroys the body, this work of art created by the Father.³⁸

3.4 *Markus*

In *Markus, Betrachtungspunkte für eine Gemeinschaft*³⁹ [*Mark, Points of Meditation for a Community*], Adrienne treats the theme of the indissolubility in marriage within the context of the Pharisees' question to Jesus concerning divorce in *Mark 10*. *Markus* is perhaps Adrienne's most systematic commentary.⁴⁰ In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar relates that the points of meditation on the Gospel of Mark were given between October 11, 1945 and March 7, 1948 to the early members of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* [Community of St. John], the secular institute founded by von Balthasar and Adrienne. Although the meditation points were directed to young lay, professional people who had decided to consecrate themselves in the evangelical counsels, they offer much to anyone who desires to pray over Mark's Gospel. "As always," writes von Balthasar, "Adrienne von Speyr speaks out of the fullness of her own contemplative view, that always gazes on the integrality of dogmatic Christian Truth, whereby she gives over what was given to her without exegetical armor and further academic ambition. When she speaks to novices, her thought process is simple and practical."⁴¹

³⁷*Pa*, 103-104. [116].

³⁸*Cf. Pa*, 106.

³⁹A. von Speyr, *Markus, Betrachtungspunkte für eine Gemeinschaft* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1971) Hereafter cited as *Ma*.

⁴⁰In most of her scriptural meditations, Adrienne does not enumerate her points. Normally, a commentary on a particular verse or passage may be one paragraph or several pages. In *Markus*, she systematically gives three points for each passage, verse or half verse, sometimes reflecting on only a few words at a time. Each three point meditation is usually one to two pages in length.

⁴¹H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Markus*, 9.

3.4.1 The Indissolubility of Marriage

Commenting on *Mark* 10, 2-12, Adrienne reflects on the indissolubility of marriage within the context of the Pharisees' question to Jesus regarding the lawfulness of divorce. When Jesus refers to Genesis,⁴² Adrienne states that in the sexual duality [*Zweigeschlechtlichkeit*] of man, a certain structure exists that the natural and the supernatural worlds embrace already from the beginning. This male-female structure was not just intimated; it *existed*. Not only is this true for man, but also for God. In other words, when the Son became man, he produced again this duality when he created the Church as his Bride. Yet this duality of Christ-Church, Bridegroom-Bride already existed at the beginning of creation. Adrienne explains further that when a person forgoes marriage to consecrate himself in the evangelical counsels, he does not abandon this duality, but he places his life in the relationship between Christ and the Church and allows himself to be consecrated in this. God fulfills the consecration and makes it as fruitful as when he created Eve from Adam.⁴³

The unity between man and woman is always at the service of fruitfulness. Adrienne explains: "The unity had to know the prior tension of being-two and from this tension they come to unity in obedience to God's decree of fruitfulness."⁴⁴ Man and woman form this unity together that comes to fulfillment in fruitfulness. Mere solitude is sterility.⁴⁵

Although the unity of man and woman is fruitful, their carnal union [*fleischliche Einheit*] is marked by separation and renunciation. Adrienne notes that when God created man and woman in their duality, he certainly foresaw the possibility of becoming one in the flesh. Yet, every bond, that this being-one has as goal, also points to separation and renunciation, as if every gift of God contains a kernel of renunciation. She writes:

If there were such a gift that no possibility of sacrifice and renunciation could be apparent in it, then we would have to be very suspicious. It would hardly be a gift of God. It would be a temptation. The best proof is the Incarnation of the Son whose Passion we cannot contemplate in any other way than as a gift of the Father to him. All suffering is included in the gift of the Incarnation; suffering and renunciation form the stamp of authenticity for the joy of the gift.⁴⁶

Therefore, just as the Son knew that his life would be one of sacrifice and renunciation, so too husband and wife, as they follow Christ in holiness, must know that their life includes a certain amount of sacrifice and renunciation. The hardships encountered in marriage do not define it completely, but they remind the spouses that they are united in Christ: in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health.

⁴²Cf. *Mk* 10, 6-8: [Jesus said to the Pharisees]: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

⁴³Cf. *Ma*, 444-445.

⁴⁴*Ma*, 445. "Die Einheit muß die vorherige Spannung des Zweiseins gekannt haben und von dieser Spannung her, im Gehorsam an das Fruchtbarkeitsgebot Gottes, zur Einheit geworden sein."

⁴⁵Cf. *Ma*, 445.

⁴⁶*Ma*, 446.

Man and woman form a unity in the service of fruitfulness and love. Sin endangers this unity. Indeed, Adrienne notes that had the first sin never occurred, had Adam and Eve not sinned, they would have had the possibility of being completely one in God in two ways. On the one hand, each would be fully united *to* God. On the other hand, each would be fully united *with each other* in God. In this way, Adrienne explains, the question of marriage or virginity would never have even arisen.⁴⁷ Adrienne underscores that before the fall into sin, only one state of life existed where the compatibility of virginal and physical fruitfulness was the unique expression of the love between God and man and between man and woman.

When Jesus strongly affirms the indissolubility of marriage to the Pharisees,⁴⁸ Adrienne comments on the binding nature of every sacrament. What the Father binds through the Son in sacrament is not to be separated. In everything that God does, he binds together. Adrienne elaborates:

God binds because he himself is covenant. He is covenant in order to mediate; he possesses in order to give. What God binds first is everything that is Christian, everything that he has given us through his Son. He binds us through every sacramental reception [...] through every Communion [...] in baptism [...] in confirmation [...] in making vows [...] in extreme unction [...] also marriage cannot escape this law of covenant through God. [...] The Lord himself, in whom all the sacraments are founded, has placed matrimony in a sacramental, indissoluble form.⁴⁹

When man and woman unite themselves in matrimony, they acknowledge the divine form of the covenant and place the whole of their married life, in all its variability, under God who alone determines the ultimate form of their life together.⁵⁰ In Christian marriage, man and woman are sacramentally united to each other and inserted into the unity of Christ with his Church, a unity which is so infinitely powerful precisely because it comes forth from God's very being and from the Son's self-sacrifice on the Cross.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have studied three of Adrienne von Speyr's commentaries on the synoptic gospels of Matthew and Mark: *Bergpredigt*, *Passion von Innen* and *Markus*. Mainly we considered three connected themes: *purity of heart*, *the inner bodily state of Jesus* as he goes forth in the Passion and the *indissolubility of marriage*.

⁴⁷Cf. *Ma*, 446: "Wäre die Sünde nicht gewesen, so hätte für Adam und Eva die Möglichkeit bestanden, in Gott vollkommen eins zu sein, jeder für sich in Gott und wiederum beide in der vollkommen eins zu sein, jeder für sich in Gott und wiederum beide in der vollkommenen Einigung mit dem andern in Gott, so daß die Frage Ehe-Ehelosigkeit sich gar nicht gestellt hätte, sondern alle den einen von Gott vorgezeichneten Weg gegangen wären." Adrienne holds that in the paradisaal state, only one state of life existed that united both virginity and marriage. We only mention this point here, but we will study it more in Part IV, after we will have seen how Adrienne develops the theme in other writings.

⁴⁸*Mk* 10,9: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

⁴⁹*Ma*, 447.

⁵⁰Cf. *Ma*, 448.

Adrienne notes that purity of heart is a fundamental Christian disposition. A person with a pure heart is intimately united with God so much that God uses that person's purity for his own designs: conversion of all hearts. On the one hand, one fosters a purity of heart not by merely following certain rules of comportment, but by truly entering into communion with the trinitarian God. On the other hand, one lives authentic purity in one's relations with one's neighbor. Indeed, purity of heart is a prerequisite for love of one's neighbor. In marriage, spouses nurture purity in the many encounters that take place in daily life: with God, each other, their children, co-workers, friends and relatives.

Jesus Christ is purity incarnate. However, as he goes forth in the Passion, he must bear the impurity and sins of all. As he gets closer to the Cross and the subsequent bearing of all man's sins, he grows more estranged from those who were once close to him. Some abandon Jesus. In any case, he must take leave of all. In her commentary, Adrienne contemplates the Son of God as he takes leave of his disciples and his Mother, as he gives his eucharistic body over in the ultimate gesture of love for his Church and, finally, as he begets and gives birth to the Church on the Cross. In Adrienne's meditations on the Son's inner bodily state, she opens the door to an authentic understanding of the significance of being united to Christ in an incarnational, eucharistic and ecclesial way: in the life of the baptized Christian, in marriage, religious life or priesthood.

The marriage covenant is indissoluble. Spouses give themselves to each other for life, because Christ has already given himself to his Church irrevocably on the Cross. In the sacrament of marriage, spouses participate as a couple in the Christ-Church covenant. Moreover, the unity between Christ and his Church is so infinitely profound because it is God's nature to bind himself to men. Indeed, God himself is covenant; he is three Persons in one. Thus, by his nature, God binds in all the sacraments.

Chapter Four: The Sacrament of Marriage in the Gospel of John

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we consider Adrienne von Speyr's commentary on the Gospel of John. The first section comprises a presentation of the pertinent themes on marriage in *Johannes [John]*, Adrienne's four volume, two thousand-page commentary on the Gospel of John. The second section is a brief meditation on the sacrament of matrimony that Adrienne offers in *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament [Cross, Word and Sacrament]*.

Because Johanne theology lies at the heart of Adrienne's thought, we find ourselves at the theological locus of her writings. In Adrienne's writings, John, apostle and evangelist, embodies a supreme attitude of "loving obedience" in which he demonstrates complete readiness to obey the Lord and to carry out whatever mission the Lord chooses to bestow on him.¹ From the group of the twelve apostles, the Lord singled out John whom he loved in a special way. Moreover, it is clear from John's writings that he loved Christ, his Lord and Master in a special way. At the Cross, the Son entrusted to John the Virgin Mary whom he took into his home to form the first cell of the Church. Therefore, it can be said that the beloved disciple unites the "Marian" and "Petrine" dimensions of the Church. In John's priesthood and closeness to the Lord, the Petrine dimension is especially visible. In John's closeness to Mary, the Marian dimension is emphasized. But rather than draw attention to himself, John "disappears" behind the persons he unites.²

4.2 Johannes I-IV

In *Johannes*,³ several themes relevant to our study emerge: the sacrament of marriage, the wedding feast at Cana, intimacy and mystery, and sexual love and fruitfulness. As with other works by Adrienne von Speyr, Hans Urs von Balthasar offers some helpful and insightful words by way of introduction. In his *Foreword to Johannes III*, which was

¹Cf. Johannes Schiettecatte, *Disponibilité Aimante. L'attitude d'amour Johannique chez Adrienne von Speyr à la lumière de l'exégèse contemporaine*.

²Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 105-108. [124-127]. Cf. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10, The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989) transl. Ronald E. Heine, 38: "We might dare say, then, that the Gospels are the first-fruits of all Scriptures, but that the first fruits of the Gospel is that according to John, whose meaning no one can understand who has not leaned on Jesus' breast nor received Mary from Jesus to be his mother also." (*Comm. in Joann.*, I, 6: PG 14, 31)

³A. von Speyr, *Das Wort Wird Fleisch, Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium, Kapitel 1-5* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1949). Hereafter cited as *Jo I. Die Streitreden, Betrachtungen über das Johannesevangelium, Kapitel 6-12*, with a Foreword by H.U. von Balthasar (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1949). Hereafter cited as *Jo II. Die Abschiedsreden, Betrachtungen über Johannes 13-17*, with a Foreword by H.U. von Balthasar (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1948). Hereafter cited as *Jo III. Geburt der Kirche, Betrachtungen über Kapitel 18-21 des Johannesevangeliums* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1949). Hereafter cited as *Jo IV. A. von Speyr, The Word Becomes Flesh, Meditations on John 1-5 [Volume I]* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), transl. Sr. Lucia Wiedenhöver, O.C.D. and Alexander Dru. *The Discourses of Controversy, Meditations on John 6-12 [Volume II]* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), transl. Brian McNeil, CRV. *The Farewell Discourses, Meditations on John 13-17 [Volume III]* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), transl. E. A. Nelson. *The Birth of the Church, Meditations on John 18-21 [Volume IV]* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), transl. David Kipp.

published first among the four volumes, von Balthasar notes that Adrienne uses a mode of expression that is guided by an informed Christian love and the mind of the Church. Her relatively simple mode of expression, that mirrors the way Christ spoke, is most helpful to the Christian who is untrained in theology but would like to prayerfully contemplate the Scriptures.⁴ Von Balthasar points out that some readers may protest that Adrienne's meditations sometimes appear anthropomorphic. However, he reminds the reader that God speaks to us in human form in all of Scripture:

If we wanted to distance from God all ideas and words related to creaturely limitation, with its living becoming and growing, transformation and decay, only a rigid, dead image of God would be left for us. In the end, we would just about be stuck with saying only what God is not. [...] The Son [...] wants to bring the Father humanly closer to us, even at the danger that we might make ourselves a human image of God.⁵

Ultimately, we must know that God's grace will carry us beyond our human finitude and our finite way of understanding God into the infinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, any comparisons or images that strive to give us a better understanding of God's love are to be embraced.⁶ The themes of the sacrament of marriage, the wedding at Cana, intimacy and mystery and the connection between sexual love and fruitfulness are treated respectively in the four sections that follow.

4.2.1 The Sacrament of Marriage

Contemplating a passage from the *Prologue*,⁷ Adrienne affirms that Jesus, the true light, enlightens every man in no other way but through the *sacraments*.⁸ Describing the effects of grace in the sacrament of marriage in particular, she notes that the corporal and spiritual relation between man and woman is consecrated and thereby opened to the infinite grace of God. Husband and wife receive this grace not individually but as a new community, a new unity in God. First of all, initiated by the spouses' mutual consent, the grace of marriage effects their own sanctification. Furthermore, in their mutual consent, the spouses open themselves not only to supernatural fruitfulness, but also to natural fruitfulness. Thus, secondly, Christian spouses consent to the possibility that God will bless their marriage with children. Adrienne explains: "From the beginning, the child of a Christian marriage [...] was affirmed as the fruit of God's grace and taken up into marriage as something that belongs to God and to the Church, something that is given as gift to the parents and not entirely at their disposal and that is a source of new strength for their love rooted in God."⁹

The child, then, is not entirely at the spouses' disposal in two ways. In the first way, they cannot be assured that their union will be blessed with physical fruitfulness. Christian spouses place this possibility in God's hands. In the second way, as noted above,

⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword to: A. von Speyr, Johannes III*, 5-6. [7].

⁵H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword to: A. von Speyr, Johannes III*, 6. [7-8].

⁶Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword to: A. von Speyr, Johannes III*, 6. [8].

⁷Cf. *Jn* 1, 9: "He was the true light that enlightened every man coming into the world."

⁸Cf. *JoI*, 91. [75]. Cf. *Jn* 1, 9.

⁹*JoI*, 108-110. [88-90]. Cf. *Jn* 1, 9.

the child ultimately belongs to God and to the Church and is to be “returned” to God to do with as he pleases. Moreover, man and woman bring children into the world as a real unity, but they hand their unity over to God to be realized in a new unity in the form of a child. By surrendering their unity to God, the parents fulfill their duty to become fruitful in him. With the baptism of the child, father and mother give their child to the Church and to the community.¹⁰

Because Christian spouses belong to each other *in God*, they know that their child may be called to the priesthood or to a religious order. This sacrifice is demanded of the parents already on their wedding day when they promise themselves to each other and to God. Adrienne clarifies: “The natural and supernatural fruitfulness of marriage and of the Church are united inseparably. A vocation to the priesthood or religious life can lead to the end of the natural fruitfulness of a family but it can lead to the beginning of unending fruitfulness in the Church.”¹¹

Adrienne notes that every Christian marriage must be open to the mystery of the Trinity and therefore to the Cross:

The Church herself was born in the death of Christ, when he gave over his own substance and potency into the complete darkness of God without being able to oversee its effect any longer. With his words: ‘Into thy hands, Father, I give over my Spirit,’ the Lord becomes the perfect model of the Begotten One [*Zeugenden*]. In so far as he forgets himself and gives himself out of his own hands, he gives his Spirit not back into the Father’s Spirit, but into his hands. Every Christian marriage must open itself to the mystery of the Cross in order that the I and all its own substance should be freed through the family in a self-sacrifice with Christ, in the Church and through the Church in the Father.¹²

Therefore, the spouses must know the utter self-giving of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit in their married life. They are to imitate and embody the Son’s self-giving that finds its culminating expression on the Cross.

4.2.2 The Wedding Feast at Cana

At the wedding feast at Cana,¹³ Jesus and Mary inaugurate the mystery that will eventually become the sacrament of marriage and in so doing, they embody the roles of man and woman. Adrienne observes:

For this reason, the Lord and his Mother stand here opposite each other as man and woman. Before, Mary was the Mother, the older one and the giver. Later, the Son will grow increasingly beyond her, and she will

¹⁰Cf. *Jo I*, 110-111. [89-90]. Cf. *Jn 1*, 9. Cf. *Jo III*, 253-254. [190-191]. Cf. *Jn 15*, 16.

¹¹*Jo I*, 111-112. [90-91]. Cf. *Jn 1*, 9.

¹²*Jo I*, 113. [91]. Cf. *Jn 1*, 9. The third sentence of this citation reads: “So weit vergißt er sich selbst, soweit gibt er sich selbst aus der Hand, daß er seinen Geist nicht in den Geist des Vaters zurückgibt, aus welchem er ihn empfangen hat, sondern in seine Hände.” Adrienne refers here to the abandonment of the Son on the Cross. Jesus empties himself so completely that he faces the sins of mankind without any kind of divine assistance, as we noted in our consideration of *Passion von Innen* in Chapter 3.

¹³Cf. *Jn 1*, 1-12

become, so to say, his younger bride. Here at the beginning of public life, they meet each other on a kind of equal level: he is the adult man, the Son who has become independent, and she is by his side as helpmate, counselor and friend. Because they embody the roles of man and woman, their behavior is differentiated, male and female.¹⁴

Adrienne notes that already both Jesus and Mary see the Cross even though it is yet to be revealed. As man, Jesus lives with the Cross ahead of him. As woman, Mary sees at once the ultimate destiny; she sees the Cross and lives with it in the back of her mind. Man is more independent, while woman is the one who observes, cares, gives inspiration and indicates.¹⁵

In marriage, the woman stands in the background, nurturing the spiritual life of her husband. She shows him something he may not have noticed, but she does not push him. On the one hand, if he thinks as a Christian, he should be allowed to make the decision himself. On the other hand, the woman must not expect that her suggestions be carried out exactly as she made them to the man. In this way, she leaves him his freedom. Sometimes the man responds to the woman's suggestion in a harsh way as he takes in her suggestion and determines how to fulfill it within his own plan. At the wedding feast of Cana, the Lord, who knows of the coming separation between him and his Mother, already perceives Mary's passion beginning. By his words, Jesus wants to prepare his Mother by not softening the reality of the pain of their future separation.¹⁶

Jesus and Mary's presence at Cana is a blessing for the wedding and for all Christian marriages to come. Indeed, Jesus and Mary show that they belong to this marriage by giving orders to the servants as if they were their own. Mary, in her consent to bear the Son, supports and embraces the consent of the bridegroom and bride at Cana. In the same way that the grace of her consent continues to work throughout her life and the life of the whole Church, the grace of marriage is not exhausted on the wedding day, but embraces the whole life of the married couple, the life of their children, their upbringing, their marriages and so too the children's children.¹⁷

4.2.3 Intimacy and Mystery in Marital Love

In any relationship between two persons, each person grows to know and love the other better through mutual self-revelation. Yet, no matter how well two people know each other, there always remains a certain amount of mystery in their relationship. This is especially true in the relationship between husband and wife. Husband and wife grow more intimate with each other and, at the same time, preserve and nurture mystery in their relationship. Adrienne sees this phenomenon played out in various ways. For example, contemplating the figures of Jesus and John, she notes that the beloved disciple reveals his Master, not by claiming intimacy with him and ingratiating himself to him, but by placing himself at a distance from the Lord. Adrienne continues: "Thus, Christian love from now

¹⁴*Jo I*, 214-215. [167-168].

¹⁵*Cf. Jo I*, 214. [167].

¹⁶*Cf. Jo I*, 215-216. [168].

¹⁷*Cf. Jo I*, 216-217. [168-169].

on will always be like this, in marriage, in friendship, in religious life, in any community. What is unsaid is not always the unrevealed. There is a revelation through silence, as there is a silence for the sake of revelation."¹⁸ Therefore, it is often in silence and discretion that the mystery of the marital union is preserved.

Engaged or married couples remain discreet and silent about certain things so that a door in their relationship might remain open. The Lord's disciples are the same way when the resurrected Jesus encounters them on the shore of Tiberias.¹⁹ They refrain from asking Jesus more questions so that they will not be drawn into something all too great. If they were to ask, the answer would completely take hold of them and astound them. Adrienne draws a similarity to this in the woman who refrains from posing the question before the engagement because she knows the man's answer would then be inescapable. Likewise, the Lord's answer to his disciples would be unavoidable.²⁰

The intimate love between man and woman must also remain exclusive. In this, Adrienne notes a difference from the Lord's love:

Different from human love, there is absolutely no jealousy or exclusiveness in the Lord's love. Between man and woman, everything must be exchanged in strict privacy, in shelteredness and protectedness. It belongs to the essence of this love that it remains exclusive within its intimacy. The Lord's love is not any less personal. Indeed, in it everything is open and the only response that the Lord expects from us to his love is this: that we do not lock that love away in ourselves. If a wife were to show an admirer those same forms of love that she had received and learned from her husband, those that he had, as it were, personally devised and given to her as gift, then the husband would be affected by this infidelity in a particularly painful way. Nothing like this can be found in the love of the Lord: it is precisely what is most personal in his love that must be given away to others, precisely what is most intimate that he is not jealous of.²¹

Therefore, God's love is totally intimate and completely devoid of exclusivity unlike marital love which by its nature must be exclusive in order to remain intimate. Husband and wife preserve the intimacy of their love when they faithfully and zealously protect its mysteries. The spirit of discretion is imperative in marriage.

The Holy Spirit plays an indispensable role in ensuring that the intimate and unrestricted nature of God's love be revealed. Adrienne observes that when two people love each other, each makes a strong effort to enter into everything that the other values and to love these things together with the other. In this way they have much in common. Still, obstacles and secrets remain between them. This would also be the case between the Lord and us, if the Holy Spirit were not to initiate us into the truth of God's love for us. The Holy Spirit enlarges our hearts and opens our minds to take in all that the Lord loves and values.

¹⁸*Jo I*, 183. [143]. Cf. *Jn I*, 26-28.

¹⁹Cf. *Jn* 21,12.

²⁰Cf. *Jo IV*, 405. [334]. Cf. *Jn* 21,12b.

²¹*Jo IV*, 146-147. [121-122]. Cf. *Jn* 19,26.

He gives an overview of God's love and presents it to us in an objective light.²² Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the infinite objectification of the love between the Father and the Son. Contrary to marriage, where a child can disturb the parents in the intimacy of their love, the Holy Spirit witnesses to the intimate love of the Trinity. In this way, he is the eternal catalyst to intimacy between the Father and the Son.²³

Although the Holy Spirit initiates us into God's love, we still remain like children in the realm of parental love. While they are formed by their parents' love and live within it, children do not participate in all its intimate aspects. Although children do not have access to certain private and intimate matters shared between their parents, they are not denied the fruit that comes about as a result of the love between father and mother. Thus, not only does a child abide in the love that each parent has for him, but also he lives forth from the love between the father and mother. Adults too live like children in the mystery between the Father and the Son without completely understanding this mystery. Little by little, adults grow in their understanding of God's love, just as when children grow up they gain a better understanding of their parents' love.²⁴

However, sometimes parents must give up some of their intimacy in order to devote themselves more to their children. They see this as something that was always included in their love and marital consent. Likewise, when the Son enters into his Passion, he directs himself to mankind, to his children. The Son does this not to be unfaithful to the Father. Instead, he goes forth within the freedom that the Father's love guarantees him.²⁵

Drawing a comparison between the sacrifices of Abraham, God and those that are made in marriage, Adrienne explains how the mystery of sacrifice and separation unfolds: only when the sacrifice has been made do the spouses begin to see its fruit:

First, love goes to its most profound depths in the sacrifice of separation. It is the same in human love: only when the sacrifice has first been made, or at least begun, can love fully have an effect and blossom out. When about to sacrifice his son after having already interiorly made the renunciation, Abraham began to understand the love of God. Until that point he had only seen his justice. God makes a sacrifice similar to that of Abraham. [...] Both acts of sacrifice are similar to each other and are yet in contrast. For in the first case [that of Abraham], a man who sacrifices discovers in this sacrifice what love is. In the other case [the sacrifice of God], men discover in the sacrifice the love of the one who sacrifices.²⁶

Through suffering and separation, the Father draws the Son to him like two spouses who have been married a long time and who prepare themselves to separate for a period of time. They examine their love and confirm it to secure it for the future. Even during the coming period of separation and loneliness, something will remain that binds them together against

²²Cf. *Jo III*, 324. [244]. Cf. *Jn* 16, 13.

²³Cf. *Jo III*, 119. [91]. Cf. *Jn* 14, 6.

²⁴Cf. *Jo III*, 14. [14-15]. Cf. *Jn* 13, 1.

²⁵Cf. *Jo III*, 15. [15]. Cf. *Jn* 13, 1.

²⁶*Jo I*, 377-378. [286-287]. Cf. *Jn* 5,27. Cf. *Ma*, 445-446: "Jede Bindung, die dieses Einssein zum Ziel hat, besagt also zugleich Trennung, Verzicht. Wie überhaupt jedes Geschenk Gottes zugleich den Keim zu einem Verzicht enthält."

the bitterness of being apart.²⁷

However, complete separation is achieved only in the Passion where the Son is perfectly abandoned by the Father and thus perfectly glorified. The love between man and woman can resemble this partially but never completely. One may suffer for the other, but inevitably the beloved cannot bear any longer that the lover suffer in his place. The beloved will feel compelled to ease the lover's suffering. As a human being, he will not allow another to suffer total loneliness. Only the Father can completely and perfectly abandon the Son and thus glorify him.²⁸

The mystery inherent in the relationship between the Father and the Son culminates on Holy Saturday. Adrienne explains how the greatest intimacy between two persons is often revealed when they are turned away from each other:

But now the Father discloses this mystery to the Son as he allows the mystery itself to speak to the Son, instead of him. God *shows* him his mystery. But in showing him his *mystery*, he does not show himself. Often, the greatest nearness and intimacy exist between people not when they speak or associate with each other, but when they are turned away from each other. One can want to show the other something so mysterious and hidden that he can do this only in his own absence, can indicate it only when turned away, perhaps only in writing, but in any case only indirectly. And this revelation of the mystery requires, at the same time, absolute trust in the love of the other who accepts it as a mystery (perhaps even as one not understood) in the same measure that it is as a mystery that it is to be communicated.²⁹

In being abandoned by the Father, the Son knows it is something the Father must do and that their love will not suffer because of it. Likewise, when two people really love each other, one of them could do a most disconcerting and incomprehensible thing without it damaging their love.³⁰

Above all, Holy Saturday is a "mystery of the passage of the incarnate Son into the darkness of the Ever-Greater Father."³¹ Something of this mystery is experienced by the bridegroom and bride on their wedding night when they sense a certain darkness before total self-surrender. They blindly feel their way and abandon themselves towards the culmination of this unknown mystery. After their love is consummated, often disappointment and estrangement set in. The husband is disappointed because his desire has been quenched. The wife feels disappointed because maybe she had imagined that things would be different. But between the Father and Son on Holy Saturday, there is never satiety or disappointment.

²⁷Cf. *Jo III*, 449. [336]. Cf. *Jn* 17, 13.

²⁸Cf. *Jo III*, 402. [301]. Cf. *Jn* 17, 1.

²⁹*Jo IV*, 187. [154]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 41. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume V: The Last Act* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), transl. Graham Harrison, 267. Referring to this passage of Adrienne, von Balthasar writes: "Here, of course, we are not speaking of the eternal Son but of the incarnate Son, who is now dead."

³⁰Cf. *Jo IV*, 189. [155]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 41.

³¹*Jo IV*, 189. [156]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 41. Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering in the Spiritual Writings of Adrienne von Speyr*, 40-43. God's "darkness" does not imply something sinister, but "otherness" in God.

Adrienne explains:

Father and Son are given over to one another from eternity, and in this giving over there was no mystery. Now, by contrast, the Son contemplates the mystery of the Father, who shows not himself, but his mystery. [...] If married love were to be as perfect as human love can be in God, there would be neither an occasion for estrangement nor the possibility of estrangement in seeing and experiencing the dark mystery of one's partner.³²

Man and woman, thus, can turn to the exchange between the Father and the Son on Holy Saturday to better fathom the mysterious depths of their own relationship and to assist them in preserving the intimacy and mystery in their conjugal life.

At a certain point in family life, children are introduced into the mystery of their parents. But sometimes when a child has first been introduced to how the mystery of love is lived between his parents, a certain estrangement can ensue. This is experienced, for example, on the part of the daughter who, upon being introduced to the "facts of life," sees her father as distant and incomprehensible. The mystery is darkened over exactly where there seemed to be nothing but love. However, if the introduction is carried out in total love and in favorable circumstances, an estrangement need not happen at all.³³

Moreover, marriage is marked by intermittent separation and coming together again. Due to the demands of work, running the household and raising children, husband and wife cannot be in each other's presence all the time. Indeed, there may even be times when man and woman must be separated for long periods of time. When they do come together again, they experience something of the joy that the Father and Son know after the Resurrection:

In this return of the Son, Father and Son enter into each other completely. They know everything, they behold each other completely, they mutually open themselves completely to each other and their common joy penetrates them both perfectly. They appear to be nothing more than the infinite joy of seeing each other again. When two lovers have yearned for each other for a long time and the moment finally comes when they encounter each other again, in this moment everything is borne up and overwhelmed by an infinitely transcending, all-enveloping joy. Maybe even what they do and what they say to each other is unimportant; it cannot capture the extent of their love. But it is transfigured through their love. It is entirely enough for them and everything appears right to them in the light of their love. In the Father and Son's encounter, that goes beyond all human hesitations and restraints, there will be only the enveloping love of reunion.³⁴

In this passage, Adrienne underscores that sometimes words cannot adequately capture the true nature of God's love or the love shared between husband and wife. Indeed, the articulation of a mystery can place boundaries on it. The joy of the Father and the Son after the Resurrection is an expression of the unarticulated mystery of their love. Ultimately,

³²*Jo IV*, 189-190. [156]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 41.

³³Cf. *Jo IV*, 189. [156]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 41.

³⁴*Jo III*, 109. [84]. Cf. *Jn* 14, 4.

God's joy, personified in the Spirit, is the manifestation of the Father and Son's "coming together" following their "separation." Therefore, it is the "distance" between them which makes room for their joy. The divine Persons are infinitely distinct, but also infinitely united. It is this unity which God desires so strongly to share with Christian spouses in the form of joy. Man and woman experience God's joy in many ways throughout their married life: in bringing new life to fruition, in the personal talents, interests and abilities that each spouse brings to the union, in their friendship and in their conjugal love, to name a few.

4.2.4 Sexual Love and Fruitfulness

In Christian matrimony, man and woman reveal their love for each other in various ways. As discussed above, a certain amount of mystery is inherent in the marital union and is to be respected by the spouses. Often, spouses discover the culmination of this mystery in the sexual expression of their love. They reveal the mystery to each other in the most intimate moment, similar to the way the Father reveals the mystery of his love to the Son on Holy Saturday, as noted above. The Father does not merely want his own voice to be repeated back to him from the world. Therefore, he calls for the Son. Likewise, when the man encounters the woman in love, he does not desire to have his own self echo back to him. He hopes to encounter her and in her to know her and himself better.³⁵ Then, just as the Son responds to the Father by calling forth believers to worship before him, so too the total response of the woman is in her giving over and in the fruit of her body that she gives over to the man. The Father wants to see how the fruit of trinitarian love grows within the believer. Likewise, the man desires his seed to come to fruition in the woman.³⁶

In this interplay between husband and wife, each spouse possesses certain predominant attributes which shape their matrimonial roles. For her part, the woman has an inborn readiness [*Bereitschaft*] or disponibility to love.³⁷ Adrienne sees this attribute, for example, in the Samaritan woman.³⁸ When the woman asks the Lord for the living water, she desires to be known by the Lord and led on further. Herein lies a true feminine trait. Adrienne clarifies: "She is a woman and as such she reminds the Lord of his Mother. A woman always sees things somehow from a practical angle. The speculative is not her concern."³⁹ Mary Magdalen, who stands at the tomb of the resurrected Jesus, also has a womanly attitude. Adrienne relates:

In her giving over [*Hingabe*], [Mary Magdalen] resembles the wife who has not yet wholly belonged to her husband: she is ready for it, but she does not yet know what the husband will make of her giving over. She would like to have children; but the idea of actually having them is beyond her and seems improbable. It is the same way in the Christian life: one offers oneself for something more. But if that something more is not

³⁵Even though here Adrienne gives the example of the man experiencing his own self in the woman, we can also imagine that the woman experiences her own self in the man. It is a mutual experience.

³⁶Cf. *Jo* 1, 310. [237]. Cf. *Jn* 4, 23.

³⁷Cf. *Jo* 1, 288. [221]. Cf. *Jn* 4, 7.

³⁸Cf. *Jn* 4, 1-42.

³⁹*Jo* 1, 295. [226]. Cf. *Jn* 4, 15.

granted, it turns out to be totally different than expected.⁴⁰

Therefore, in the examples of the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalen, Adrienne demonstrates the woman's inborn desire to give herself to the man and to be led further in love by him. Inherent in the woman's attitude is both a self-giving and self-subjection which must be received with consideration and care by the man.

Adrienne explains that for his part, the husband is the head of the household and has the authority. He works together with the wife who runs the household. With love as the common precept for both spouses, the husband's authority and the wife's running of the house are joined in a relationship of mutual agreement.⁴¹ Yet, when it comes to household possessions, a trustfulness prevails between them where neither wants to calculate everything or demand something because they know that everything which belongs to them ultimately belongs to the Lord.⁴²

Often, the new bridegroom and bride first become aware of each other's wider interests only after the honeymoon is over. The newlyweds have spent some time in secluded intimacy, but now the husband returns to his job and re-connects with his friends and interests. The wife realizes she has to adapt to this new, wider circle and discover her husband anew within it. These changes resemble those that the apostles undergo when they encounter Christ after the Resurrection. As the apostles get into the fishing boat with Jesus, they come together as Church for the first time for a new journey. Adrienne notes: "The Church must now conform herself anew to the Lord, to the broadened horizon that has come about through his return to the Father."⁴³

If there is an interplay that occurs on the level of roles and possessions in spousal life, so too an interplay exists between the body and spirit. Although there are times in a marriage when the center of gravity may be more in the spirit or more in the flesh, nevertheless this occurs within the framework of the subordination of the flesh to the spirit.⁴⁴ Adrienne indicates that because the Word was spiritual in its Incarnation and because our way to the Father is through the incarnate Word, there is the possibility in marriage that the center of gravity be entirely transposed into the spirit.⁴⁵ However, this type of complete transposition into the spirit remains a special call within marriage; in most marriages, abstinence from sexual intercourse remains temporary.

Above all, married couples can gaze on the Son in order to better understand their relationship on all its levels, such as the spiritual, corporal and emotional. Adrienne points to Jesus as the one who perfectly embodied each of these: "According to the spirit he is in

⁴⁰Jo IV, 231. [190]. Cf. Jn 20, 16.

⁴¹Cf. Jo III, 438-439. [329]. Cf. Jn 17, 10.

⁴²Cf. Jo IV, 389. [320]. Cf. Jn 21, 10.

⁴³Jo IV, 336-337. [276-277]. Cf. Jn 21, 3.

⁴⁴Adrienne notes that in general the Church struggles against too much spiritualization. Thus, it would not be irreverent for mothers to breast feed their infants in churches, because Mary also breast fed her Son while in prayer. Cf. Jo IV, 315-316. [260]. Cf. Jn 20, 31.

⁴⁵Cf. Jo I, 148. [118]. Cf. Jn 1, 14a. Obviously, there are natural periods in marriage when the husband and wife's relationship must be more spiritual, rather than physical. For example, in the weeks immediately before parturition, the spouses must refrain from sexual intercourse. Or, should the couple practice *natural family planning*, there will be times when they will abstain. These occasions of abstinence offer much possibility for greater spiritual growth in the spousal relationship.

the Father, but according to the flesh he is a man among men. [...] He has the same habits and physical needs that they do and he unashamedly and openly uses everything that is necessary for sustaining life. [...] He takes part in people's joys, their feasts, their weddings."⁴⁶

In addition to the interplay that occurs between body and spirit in marital life, there is also interplay between the *act of love* and the *state of love*. To illustrate this, Adrienne gives the example of the kiss between spouses. When man and woman kiss they move towards each other, but then move apart. But in moving apart, far from their love being taken away, it is more a return of an *act of love* into the *state of love*. Their kiss represents the visible sign of their love. It is not love itself, but its revelation. Love goes beyond this brief act. The spouses imitate the Son who, sent by the Father, goes forth in his mission, to only later return to him. Furthermore, the proof of the spouses' love is not found in the frequency of the act of love. The single act, like Jesus's death and Resurrection, can be a valid testimony to the enduring nature of love.⁴⁷

While spouses look to the Son, they also look to the Holy Spirit who animates their conjugal love. Moreover, their conjugal union is a foretaste of heavenly love:

The Spirit enlivens as breath and wind the *direction* of every love. For example, the sexual love of the male in intercourse exhausts itself in itself and leaves tiredness and surfeit behind until he recovers physically. Then this act calls for a new act, that, however, is not an intensification of the first one, and so everything remains unceasingly on the same horizontal level. But when the Spirit appears in this carnal love, it becomes subordinated to his goals. The bodily process becomes secondary and the main emphasis is lifted to the spiritual: to the love through the woman to the child, to the sacrament, to God. The surfeit felt before now plays only a subordinate and integrated role.⁴⁸

The chaste bodily and spiritual union that occurs in the conjugal act gives the spouses a foretaste of heavenly love that will far surpass anything experienced on earth. The bodily senses, then are a first step towards the spirit and help the spouses to nurture a yearning for God. But apart from God, the senses are mere distractions.⁴⁹

When man and woman come together in the conjugal act, each must first be solitary before the fruit of their love can be born. Adrienne elaborates:

True solitude [*Einsamkeit*] and true love are one. If a man desires to have a son, he must lose something of his substance. He must give it away and allow it to be borne by a woman. In order to be two, he must be solitary [*einsam*]. God gives his substance in giving his Son to the world, but he is eternally two in order to be solitary. The similarity is therefore at the same time a contrast. Correspondingly, a woman, in order to be solitary (who not only is in solitude during the time of her pregnancy but also during the

⁴⁶*Jo I*, 315-316. [241]. Cf. *Jn* 4, 27.

⁴⁷Cf. *Jo III*, 433. [324]. Cf. *Jn* 17, 8.

⁴⁸*Jo I*, 248. [192]. Cf. *Jn* 3, 8.

⁴⁹Cf. *Jo I*, 311-312. [238-239]. Cf. *Jn* 4, 24.

time of motherhood) must receive the seed from outside. She receives what is foreign to her from the man and receives the other substance, that she lets ripen in solitude. Then she must surrender the foreign being so as to be two again. What she takes in, in order to be solitary is foreign. What she gives back in order to be together is her own.⁵⁰

In this way, to bring new life into the world, each spouse is, in his or her own way, "solitary." Thus, the child, the personification of spousal love, is not only fruit of the spouses' union, but also of each spouse's solitariness. Before giving oneself to the other, one must first have a certain awareness of being solitary. However, precisely in those moments when one is aware of being only a part of the whole, the Holy Spirit brings consolation.⁵¹

The highest measure of the spouses' physical fruitfulness is the begetting of a child. Nonetheless, herein lies a paradox. On the one hand, when one compares the physical fruit that is produced with the number of male sperm cells, such physical fruitfulness seems very limited.⁵² On the other hand, the spiritual fruitfulness is unbounded. Adrienne compares the apparent finitude of physical fruitfulness with the infinitude of spiritual fruitfulness:

Bodily fruitfulness is strange in that in itself it is tremendous almost to the point of infinity. But out of the enormous number of its potentialities, only an insignificantly small number actually come to development. It is as if the bodily element, the limitedness of matter, hindered the development of all its potentialities. In the virginal, otherworldly fruitfulness of the Lord, these limitations fall away. His fruits are definitely vast beyond measure. In the bodily act, there is a giving over [*Hingabe*] of infinite possibilities, but in such a way as to be limited to a single human being. In this, as well, the fruitfulness is narrowed. In the giving over of one-self to the Lord, who is God, this limitation dissolves also because the Lord offers himself up unendingly to the unending Father, thereby allowing the fruitfulness of the virginal to be without limit. Bodily fruitfulness is always at a loss if one considers the potentialities that are offered up in it. Spiritual fruitfulness in the Lord and in his Mother is a surplus. It is always richer than one could expect, because it always lives from the grace of the Cross.⁵³

Of the immense number of sperm cells that are given over to the woman in the conjugal act, only one is used to impregnate. Therefore, thousands of sperm cells are not used for fecundation and it appears that much potential fruitfulness is lost. Adrienne underscores the apparent finitude of bodily fruitfulness in order to highlight the primacy and importance of spiritual fruitfulness in marriage. Nonetheless, it is clear that bodily fruitfulness retains much importance as the Lord utilizes it to bring about spiritual fruitfulness.

⁵⁰*Jo I*, 155. [123]. Cf. *Jn* 1, 14b.

⁵¹Cf. *Jo III*, 157. [119]. "Wenn aber der Mensch an das andere Geschlecht stößt, wenn ihm Ergänzung geboten wird, dann erkennt er zugleich, daß er ewig nur ein bestimmter Teil des Ganzen sein wird. Der Heilige Geist aber ist in diesem Augenblick da, um ihn darüber hinwegzuträsten." Cf. *Jn* 14, 17.

⁵²Cf. *Jo III*, 334. [251]. Cf. *Jn* 16, 15.

⁵³*Jo IV*, 153. [127]. Cf. *Jn* 19, 27.

With virginal love, there is no limit to the fruit that can be borne. For example, a virgin gives her life to feeding the poor and taking in the destitute. Eventually, she founds an order for other women to consecrate themselves in the Lord. As a result many poor and homeless people are cared for and consoled. But perhaps more importantly, people look on the work and witness of this virgin and begin to amend their lives and grow in holiness. Others come to follow the virgin's path of holiness. As a result of one person's life of holiness, so much fruitfulness is poured out that it cannot be measured.

As long as man and woman give their entire fruitfulness over to the Lord, as long as they give him power over both their consummation and abstinence, they know that he will watch over it⁵⁴ and the Holy Spirit will make fruitful every situation that threatens to end up negatively, for example, the situation of a childless marriage. Adrienne notes: "Through [the Holy Spirit] everything becomes fruitful, and indeed always in such a way that he begins in the most profound part of the human being, in the most human part, and turns this outward to God, turning outward, as it were, what is most inward."⁵⁵

Ultimately, spouses can contemplate trinitarian fruitfulness in order to better understand their God-given fruitfulness. It is the gift of the child that draws the spouses into a more profound awareness of the mysteries of human and divine love. Adrienne explains:

[Man and woman's] personal and mutual giving over manifests, primarily, the fulfillment of the two-in-unity [*Zweieinheit*] of their nature, just as at first only the love between the Father and Son appears in God. But in the same way (for everything is a simile) that the indescribable fruitfulness of eternal love reveals itself, in the Son's return to the Father, as a new origin of the Holy Spirit, so too the child appears between man and woman. For it is the child who enables the love between man and woman to become eternal movement, transforms the seemingly complete into a true beginning and bursts open the circle that threatened to close. And it is also the child who reveals the grace character of love [*Gnadencharakter der Liebe*] by pointing to its divine origin (for God gives the child as gift).⁵⁶

Thus, the child reveals the supernatural character of the parents' love just as the Holy Spirit reveals the love between the Father and the Son. Each in his own way---the child and the Spirit--- is a witness to God's grace and love.

With pregnancy and birth, the husband and wife are opened to another aspect of their fruitfulness that is characterized by a tension between the mother's intimate bond with her child during pregnancy and the father's feeling of separation. During pregnancy, the mother experiences a closeness with the child growing inside her that resembles the closeness of the Father and the Son. Adrienne observes that the love that unites the Father and Son, "is love as essence, as living substantial unity itself; just as the spiritual love of a mother for her child during pregnancy consists in both an organic and substantial unity."⁵⁷ For his part, the father feels a distinct separation from his child during the time of

⁵⁴Cf. *Jo* III, 405. [303]. Cf. *Jn* 17, 1.

⁵⁵*Jo* III, 152-153. [116]. Cf. *Jn* 14, 16.

⁵⁶*Jo* I, 31. [28-29]. Cf. *Jn* 1, 2.

⁵⁷*Jo* II, 141. [119]. Cf. *Jn* 7, 28.

pregnancy. He has given his substance over to his spouse, but now he stands in the background. With the birth of the child, however, the father takes his place alongside the mother. No longer hidden in the background, his role is easily discernible. Adrienne likens this to the conception of Jesus, where the Father remains in the background by allowing the Spirit to represent him. During Jesus's life, however, the Spirit remains in the background so that the Father may be revealed.⁵⁸

With the birth of the child, both father and mother become aware of the suffering inherent in their fruitfulness. Indeed, the mother experiences a whole interplay of emotional and spiritual movement within her. Her joy is hidden in her labor pains, but hidden in her joy is the suffering the child will cause her in the future. But also hidden in her suffering is the joy for having suffered. She perceives, then, how joy and suffering come together in her fruitfulness.⁵⁹ When the difficult part of the child's delivery comes upon her, the wife sends the husband away and gives him things to do to prepare for the expected child.⁶⁰ In this, the mother resembles the Son who, as he goes forth in his Passion, desires that the Father should not have any feeling of alienation: "The Son wants to taste the suffering, the forsakenness and the night all alone, and while he does so the Father should feel in advance the joy of the Son's coming glorification with him."⁶¹

Not hiding the pain of her contractions from her husband, the wife shares with him something of the suffering that goes along with birth. Like Jesus who communicates something of his suffering to his disciples so that they too can share in its fruitfulness, the woman tells the man of her labor pains in order that he can share in the mystery of the love that encompasses them.⁶² The husband, therefore, shares in her labor pains by not leaving his wife alone during this period of her painful contractions,⁶³ just as, after the Lord's Resurrection, the apostles share concretely and intimately in the wounds of the Lord. Jesus appears in their midst and shows them his hands and side. They realize that Jesus has suffered these wounds for their sake just as the wife endures labor pains for both spouses. The disciples experience the "joy of the Church over the magnificent ineffability of the

⁵⁸Cf. *Jo I*, 281. [215-216]. Cf. *Jn* 3, 34.

⁵⁹Cf. *Jo I*, 23-24. [22]. Cf. *Jn* 1, 1.

⁶⁰It is clear that Adrienne is speaking here within the context of her time, that is the 1940's and 50's. Nowadays, the father is often present at the birth, helping the mother with her breathing and supporting her throughout the whole birthing process. It is worth noting that in the paragraph that follows, another scenario is presented where the husband remains with his wife throughout parturition.

⁶¹*Jo III*, 417. [312]. Re: *Jn* 17,5.

⁶²Cf. *Jo III*, 55. [44]. Cf. *Jn* 13,21.

⁶³Adrienne notes that when a woman suffers, she is comforted by the presence of a man. But the Lord suffers alone. While a woman would be all too ready to console him, Jesus takes the full brunt of the suffering on the Cross. To be sure, Mary accompanies her Son in his suffering, but only in such a way that his Passion is not lessened. Cf. *Jo II*, 533. [438-439]. Cf. *Jn* 12, 44. In another place, Adrienne compares the Lord on the Cross and the woman giving birth. Cf. *Jo II*, 284. [236-237]: "Dieses absolute Licht hat seinen Ursprung im Kreuz. Wenn zwar schon das ganze Leben des Herrn nicht ein teilhaftes Licht war, sondern ein volles Licht, so erscheint doch erst im Kreuz sein Licht so zusammengefaßt, so intensiv, daß es die Unwiderstehlichkeit hat, alles an sich zu ziehen. Gerade die äußerste Finsternis des Kreuzes wird zur Geburtsstätte des äußersten Lichtes, wie die Mutter schreit, weil sie vor Schmerzen nicht mehr kann, und im selben Augenblick schreit auch schon das Kind, weil es lebt." Cf. *Jn* 9, 5.

Bridegroom in her midst."⁶⁴

4.3 *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament*

In *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament*⁶⁵ [*Cross, Word and Sacrament*], Adrienne contemplates the scene from John's Gospel when the dying Jesus gives Mary and John to each other⁶⁶ and shows how marriage is instituted and blessed by Jesus's self-giving and by the giving of Mary and John to each other. At the same time both virginal and bridal, Mary and John stand beyond individual sacramental marriage in the realm of the Church that is also virginal and bridal. By giving Mary over to John, Jesus establishes that man and woman from now on are to live their marital union permanently as the Church desires of them. Adrienne observes that if an ordinary couple were to stand underneath the Cross and receive this blessing from the Lord, they would be forever exalted. Indeed, Mary and John *are* this couple that the Lord creates from the Cross by his words and act.⁶⁷

By giving John to Mary as her "son," Jesus affirms her fruitful love.⁶⁸ Indeed, she is made Mother to the Church for all people, for all time. From now on, Mary will accept any son or daughter her Son desires to give her. John, for his part, receives another Mother in addition to his father and mother. In this spiritual union between Mary and the beloved disciple, John, the priest, represents Christ in the name of all human beings:

The nuptial blessing [*Ehesegen*] is established at the same time in this blessing of the Cross [*Kreuzessegen*]. On the Cross, the Lord has given man and woman to each other. But it is an ecclesial act that is first a sovereign act of the head of the Church administered to the Church herself. In the greatest disponibility, he produces this deed out of his innermost self, a deed that is to become an unshakeable bond in his body, the Church. No bond is stronger than that of the last will and testament of a dying man. And the Lord's sovereign will that shapes and orders his Church, is, at the same time, a response to the extremity and urgency of death.⁶⁹

Thus, Jesus institutes the sacrament of marriage and, at the same time, gives Mary and John to each other. Marriage finds its *foundation* and *principal analogy* in the Christ-Church union and its *universal model* in the persons of Mary and John. Mary, in her immaculate virginity, represents the Church and John, in his priesthood, represents Christ.

The Church, receiving the sacramental institution of marriage from the Lord, takes on the responsibility of leading spouses to fulfillment of their marriage vows. By participating in the Church's spiritual life, man and woman enable their relationship to be ennobled and their fruitfulness is nourished by that of the Church through obedience to her

⁶⁴Jo IV, 260. [214]. Cf. Jn 20, 20.

⁶⁵A. von Speyr, *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1957). *Cross, Word and Sacrament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983). Hereafter cited as KW.

⁶⁶Cf. Jn 19, 26-27: "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."

⁶⁷Cf. KW, 39-40. [30-31].

⁶⁸Cf. KW, 45. [34].

⁶⁹KW, 43-44. [33].

and ultimately, to Jesus Christ, her founder. Above all, one cannot forget that Jesus pronounces his words from the Cross that forms every human relationship, whether that of Mary and John, Church and man or man and woman.⁷⁰

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered marriage themes in *Johannes I-IV* and *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament*. In *Johannes I-IV*, Adrienne treats four themes of marriage: the sacrament of matrimony, the wedding feast at Cana, intimacy and mystery, and sexual love and fruitfulness. When man and woman open themselves to the *sacrament of matrimony*, they consecrate their physical and bodily relationship to God, thereby opening themselves to his grace. They give their physical fruitfulness over to God in two ways. First, they know that ultimately only God can bless them with physical fruitfulness. Second, if parents are blessed with children, they know that their children belong to God and to the Church. Moreover, inserted as one covenant in the Christ-Church union, Christian spouses embrace the mystery of the Cross.

At the *wedding feast at Cana*, Adrienne shows how Jesus and Mary inaugurate the mystery that will become the sacrament of marriage. Each embodies the roles of man and woman. Mary observes, cares for the wedding participants and gives inspiration. Jesus is more independent. Moreover, both Jesus and Mary experience Cana knowing that the Cross lies ahead. Most importantly, their presence at Cana is a blessing for all marriages to come.

Intimacy and mystery are important components of Christian matrimony. Often in silence and discretion, the most profound mysteries of the marital union are preserved. By its nature, marital love must be exclusive. Husband and wife do not share the intimate truths of their love with others. Different from marital love, God's love is completely inclusive. What is most intimate about the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God wants to share with us. Furthermore, even though the Holy Spirit opens the spouses to trinitarian love, they still remain like children before God, unable to fully fathom the most profound aspects of trinitarian love. On Holy Saturday, the Father and the Son reveal the greatest mystery shared by them precisely at the moment when they are turned away from each other. Thus, man and woman imitate trinitarian mystery when they preserve the mystery of their love.

Finally, Adrienne explains in a variety of ways the interplay of *sexual love and fruitfulness* in marriage. When the man encounters the woman in their relations, he does not simply want to receive back the echo of his own self. Instead, he yearns to encounter the woman herself and in her to know her and himself better. Man and woman have distinctive attributes and roles. While the woman has an inborn readiness to love, the man possesses the overall authority. Together they know that they themselves, the fruit of their love (their children) and their possessions ultimately belong to God. Furthermore, there is an interplay of body and spirit in marriage. At times, the bodily experiences of married love predominate. Other times, the spiritual experiences are emphasized. In any case, man and woman go from the act of love into the state of love and vice versa. A simple act of love, such as a kiss, is a revelation of the more permanent state of their love. Adrienne explains

⁷⁰Cf. KW, 45-46. [34-35].

the paradox that husband and wife must first be solitary in order to bring forth a child that is the visible, physical fruit of their love. With pregnancy and birth, the spouses experience the strong link between fruitfulness and suffering, thereby reflecting and participating in trinitarian fruitfulness and suffering.

In *Kreuzeswort und Sakrament*, Adrienne demonstrates how Mary and John stand beyond any individual sacramental marriage. When Jesus gives them to each other as he is dying on the Cross, he blesses their union that serves as a model for all marriages. Both virginal and bridal, they incarnate the Christ-Church relationship, where Mary, the spotless Virgin, embodies the Church and John, in his priesthood, personifies Christ.

Chapter Five: Marriage Themes in the Pauline Works

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five presents the marriage themes treated in Adrienne's commentaries on the Pauline works: *Korinther I* [First Corinthians], *Der Epheserbrief* [The Letter to the Ephesians] and *Der Kolosserbrief* [The Letter to the Colossians]. Also included here is her treatment of marriage in *Die Katholischen Briefe I* [The Catholic Letters, Volume I] where she gives a commentary of *The First Letter of Peter*. There are four main sections in this chapter. Section 5.2 treats relevant passages in *Korinther I*. Section 5.3 examines *Der Epheserbrief*. Section 5.4 includes meditations on marriage from *Der Kolosserbrief*. Section 5.5 considers the commentary on *First Peter*.

5.2 Korinther I

Among Adrienne's many commentaries, *Korinther I*¹ may be one of the most accessible and unified. In the *Foreword*, von Balthasar notes how Adrienne comments verse for verse in a straightforward fashion without anticipating the verses that follow thus allowing each passage to resonate in her much the same way that the Corinthians would have heard Paul's words resonate in them for the first time. Von Balthasar observes that Adrienne possessed a gift to hear Paul's words as true revelation of the incarnate triune God even though she never studied theology or exegesis. In *Korinther I*, Paul shines forth as one who proclaims the Lord's Word as the "servant of the Lord, the child of his Father, the Bride of her Bridegroom."²

Adrienne's commentary on Paul's letter in *Korinther I* uncovers several fundamental themes: the theology of body and spirit; mixed marriage; the roles of man and woman; and the Virgin Mary and Christian spouses.

5.2.1 Theology of the Body and Spirit

In *Korinther I*, Adrienne unfolds how the body is created, redeemed and sanctified by the triune God. She underscores that the Father creates the body for the Son and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in his Eucharist, the Son takes man into his own body in obedience to the Father and with the aid of the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in the body. Therefore, as temple of the Spirit, the body was created by the Father and consecrated by the Son through his Incarnation and Cross.³ Body and spirit are thus sanctified by the trinitarian God:

The Lord is holy, because he is eternal God in heaven, but also because he constitutes and embodies heavenly holiness as man *in body and spirit*. It is thus sanctification not only in spirit, but also explicitly in body, in its nature and works. In contemplating the body of the Son we understand that it is possible to live as man among men and thereby to be completely holy.

¹A. von Speyr, *Korinther I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1956). Hereafter cited as *I K*. Adrienne dictated *Korinther I* to von Balthasar in 1949.

²H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Korinther I*, 5-8.

³*IK*, 188. Cf. 1 *Cor* 6, 19.

And the Son shares with us this holiness for both: *body and spirit*.⁴

Thus, the Son is not only the model of sanctification of *body and spirit*, but also he gives man and woman the means to live this sanctification. By becoming man and giving himself over to God, the Son makes it possible for all sons and daughters of the Father in the Spirit to do the same.

Adrienne explains that when Christ embodied our body on the Cross, he asked us to give our bodies over to the Father along with him. And in giving over one's body, one gives over one's spirit at the same time. Whether one gives one's body and spirit to another in the Lord in marriage or whether one gives oneself to God in the state of virginity, one must know that the Lord takes on one's body. He asks that it be left to him so that it be crucified along with his body.⁵

Commenting on St. Paul's declaration that "All things are lawful for me,"⁶ Adrienne explains that this is to be understood under the Son's precept of love: *Everything* is allowed the Son because he finds his *everything* within the will of the Father. We can strive to give ourselves completely over to the will of the Father, but we know that it includes the Virgin Birth, the Son's sacrifice, his death, descent into hell, Resurrection and Ascension.⁷ Because the body is "for the Lord and the Lord for the body,"⁸ the man who goes with his body to the Lord receives much more than he ever could have imagined possible. Adrienne returns here to the theme of the unlimitedness of the spiritual fruitfulness of the state of virginity: he who gives himself completely over to the Lord in consecrated virginity, poverty and obedience receives an unlimited spiritual fruitfulness, even though he will not be blessed with physical fruitfulness.⁹

Furthermore, should one give oneself over to another in marriage, one receives fulfillment and joy from God, because he has made the sexes for one another. Indeed, in the conjugal act, God has given to man and woman an analogy to understand infinite transcendence. In the conjugal act, the man feels overpowered, but this encounter remains analogous to the infinite transcendence inherent in the encounter with Christ's eucharistic Body.¹⁰ The abundance of grace that the Lord gives in the Eucharist can never be limited. Therefore, the bodily union of man and woman is an expression of a spiritual reality that already exists: the love of Christ witnessed in the humble submission to the Father's will¹¹ and the Incarnation and Eucharist that is a permanent re-presentation of the Son's submission. Above all, Jesus did not only institute sacramental marriage, but also he sanctified the whole realm of the body by becoming one flesh with us. And marriage, like

⁴IK, 228. Cf. 1 Cor 7, 34b.

⁵Cf. IK, 179. Cf. 1 Cor 6, 13.

⁶1 Cor 6, 12.

⁷Cf. IK, 176. Cf. 1 Cor 6, 12.

⁸1 Cor 6, 13.

⁹Cf. IK, 180. Cf. 1 Cor 6, 13.

¹⁰IK, 180.

¹¹Cf. IK, 184: "Die leibliche Verbindung von Mann und Frau läßt die zwei ein Fleisch sein, wobei die leibliche Einheit Ausdruck einer schon bestehenden geistigen und, von Christen vollzogen, Ausdruck der Liebe Christi ist, die sich auch in der leiblichen Hingabe dem Willen des Vaters, seinen Zwecken und Plänen in der von ihm geschaffenen Natur unterwirft." Cf. 1 Cor 6, 16.

consecrated virginity, takes place in spiritual unity with the Lord.¹²

Commenting on Paul's words in 1 *Corinthians* 7, Adrienne addresses the theme of paradisaical fruitfulness. *Before the fall into sin*, the command to multiply and fill the earth was contained within the command of fundamental fruitfulness in a formal way as poverty and obedience would later be contained in the Christian demand of virginity. Adam and Eve would fulfill God's command to multiply and fill the earth within their virginal state. They would desire each other corporally, however, non-sexually and their desire would be encompassed within the desire of the Father and the Son for each other. However, Adrienne underscores that in order to understand the fruitfulness of Adam and Eve, we would have to consider Mary's fruitfulness. By contemplating the virginal motherhood of Mary, that is both physically and spiritually fruitful, one has a glimpse into the nature of paradisaical fruitfulness. More than anyone, Mary fulfills God's first command to be fruitful and multiply. Nonetheless, ultimately we can no longer imagine what constituted the exact nature of paradisaical fruitfulness.¹³

In the world *after the fall*, sexuality is necessarily linked with abstention. Adrienne sees how the sacraments have this element of abstention:

For Eve, to be dependent on man is a penance, as well as, to receive, bear and raise children. For Adam, penance would mean to be bound to the fertility cycles and conditions of his wife, to have to reckon with the variability of her fruitfulness---humbled to see spiritual love so tied up with the flesh, on all the painful and tragic aspects that go along with the sexual world. The moment of penance arises when man must abstain from sexual relations. Here the sacrament also has its place: priesthood ordination and matrimony, which as with all the sacraments---confession for example, but also the Eucharist---require in them a moment of abstention. He who wants to enter into Christian marriage must know that he takes on himself conditions of the most difficult penance, more difficult perhaps than what one receives in priesthood.¹⁴

Abstention, then, is a part of marriage as it is a part of the other sacraments. To receive the Eucharist, one must abstain from eating at least one hour before and "abstain" from mortal sin. To receive absolution in the sacrament of confession, one must resolve to sin no more and to "abstain" from sinful situations. To be ordained a priest, one must give one's body to the Lord in celibacy in a consecration which is a source of much grace, but also is a form of abstention.

¹²Cf. *IK*, 186-187. Cf. 1 *Cor* 6, 18.

¹³Cf. *IK*, 191-193: "Damals gibt es das Auseinander der Körper, aber im Zueinander der Geister. Hätten sie nicht gesündigt, so hätte ihnen Gott auch die Erfüllung, das Dritte gegeben, das wir uns nicht mehr anders vorstellen können denn als bloße leibliche Frucht, das aber in der paradiesischen Ordnung anders umrissen gewesen wäre. [...] Sie wäre nicht unfleischlich, aber unsexuell." We see here another example of Adrienne's understanding of paradisaical fruitfulness. The elements are stated here: bodily, non-sexual and virginal fruitfulness understood in the light of the Virgin Mary. We will deepen our understanding of this point in Part IV. Cf. 1 *Cor* 7, 1.

¹⁴*IK*, 194. Cf. 1 *Cor* 7, 1.

After the fall, the spouse no longer belongs to him or herself but to the other. Adrienne explains that this aspect of “owing-to-the-other” carries with it a taste of guilt that stems from the order of original sin. In the course of married life, the character of “belonging-to-another” combined with the aspect of “owing-to-the-other” grows ever stronger. With the fall into sin, each spouse assumes a spiritual yearning in the other that stems from neither of them, but from God. To be entitled to acknowledge this spiritual moment in the other belongs now to the penitential character of marriage and its mutual giving over. Thus, it is a giving of one’s right based on having the right of the other.¹⁵

5.2.2 Mixed Marriage

Among the topics that Paul treats in *First Corinthians* is that of marriages between a Christian and a non-Christian. Taking up Paul’s words, Adrienne observes that in a mixed marriage the Christian partner must take on the same duty that both would assume in a sacramental marriage. In other words, the Christian spouse must live a Christian life. It depends on the good will of the non-Christian spouse how well the Christian spouse would be able to lead the couple’s marriage in a Christian way. However, because the non-Christian cannot be forced to take on the Christian’s belief, the Christian spouse is at a disadvantage. For this reason, a marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian bears the marks of the Cross and sacrifice in a special way. Nonetheless, the Christian spouse must be able to see both the joy and the sacrifices that go along with such a marriage, thus reminding him that the kingdom of God is not of this world.¹⁶

Although a mixed marriage is often marked by difficulties, the Christian spouse should realize that the graces he receives have an effect in others in the same way that the graces of Christ on the Cross have an effect on all sinners. This mysterious working of grace is related to the mystery of the Church’s treasure of prayer. Adrienne underlines that the most personal prayer has the most super-personal effect. The grace, therefore, affects both partners. The believer’s own sanctity is cultivated in an unseen way and the non-believer is touched by the resulting grace precisely because Jesus suffered not for himself, but for the Father and for all men in order to bring about their sanctity.¹⁷

5.2.3 The Roles of Man and Woman

In *First Corinthians*, Paul treats the theme of the roles of man and woman in Christian marriage. Adrienne emphasizes that ultimately these roles are founded on those of the Persons in the Holy Trinity:

¹⁵Cf. *I K*, 195-197. Cf. *1 Cor* 7, 3-5. Adrienne here is referring to the so-called “marriage debt.” Cf. *CIC* § 1135 “Each of the spouses has equal obligations and rights to those things which pertain to the partnership of conjugal life.” Thus, each spouse has the right to the body of the other. But also, as far as Adrienne is concerned, each has the right that one’s spirit be enriched by the other’s spirit. In the original state, there was a more direct enriching of the spirit in the each spouse’s relationship with God. In marriage under the redeemed state, one’s spirit is ultimately enriched in the uniting of one’s body and spirit with that of the other spouse. Thus, on the one hand, there is a certain penitential nature to conjugal relations: one is dependent on the other for an enrichment of the spirit, as well as, of the body. On the other hand, this “new” mutual enriching of the spouses can be a source of much spiritual growth and sanctification in the Lord.

¹⁶Cf. *I K*, 203-205. Cf. *1 Cor* 7, 12-13.

¹⁷Cf. *I K*, 205. Cf. *1 Cor* 7, 14.

In faith, a complete order abounds that also establishes the order between husband and wife, just as in faith the relationship of the Son to the Father becomes clear. This order comes to light first in the New Covenant, because in the Old Covenant the Son was still hidden behind the Father. [...] In the trinitarian order there is no gradation of being between the Persons, so that the Father would be completely God as would the Son or the Spirit. Indeed, in each Person the one divinity comes to its perfect fullness, even when the Son is begotten by the Father and the Spirit comes forth from both. The distinctiveness of the Persons does not mean a lessening in being. Instead, each Person possesses his unity and infinitude even more, precisely through the distinctiveness of the relationships between the Persons in such a way that each Person uncovers the distinctive characteristics of the other.¹⁸

Therefore, the distinctiveness in the trinitarian Persons is precisely what brings about their unity. Likewise, in the relationship between spouses: because each has a distinctive role they are brought closer together. Indeed, each spouse in living his or her distinctive role discovers the uniqueness of the other.

Furthermore, man and woman are equal in being and are ordered hierarchically, precisely because the Father and Son are this way. Adrienne explains:

The Head of the Son is the Father. Now that this reality has been revealed, the puzzle of the relationship between men is resolved: in the likeness of the Trinity both can exist together: equality of being and hierarchically ordered gradations. [...] Therefore, in sexuality we must no longer see merely the customs concerning ephemeral nature, but also---however much sexuality presents itself in its present forms---a reflection and a presentiment of eternal life. However, this reflection can only be correctly clarified when the sexes look to the Son and contemplate his relationship to the Father and see how he allows himself to be given as Head. The wife cannot see an absolute headship in the man; he is seen in a Christian way as her principal head only because Christ is his head. For this reason, the wife is not only not humbled, but she is raised up. The husband, thus, as her head must humble himself before Christ in order to carry his elevated position.¹⁹

¹⁸ I K, 314. "Im Glauben herrscht eine vollkommene Ordnung, die auch die endgültige Ordnung herstellt zwischen Mann und Weib, so wie in ihm das Verhältnis des Sohnes zum Vater deutlich wird. Diese Ordnung kommt erst im Neuen Bund ans Licht, weil im Alten Bund der Sohn noch verborgen hinter dem Vater stand. [...] In der trinitarischen Ordnung gibt es keine Abstufung des Wesens in den Personen, so daß der Vater umfassender Gott wäre als der Sohn oder der Geist; sondern in jeder Person kommt die eine Gottheit zu ihrer vollkommenen Fülle, auch wenn der Sohn vom Vater gezeugt wird und der Geist aus beiden hervorgeht. Das Anderssein der Personen bedeutet kein Wenigersein im Wesen, das vielmehr gerade durch die Gegenseitigkeit der persönlichen Beziehungen seine Einheit und Unendlichkeit besitzt, so daß jede Person die Vorzüge der andern aufdeckt." Cf. 1 Cor 11, 3.

¹⁹ I K, 315. "Das Haupt des Sohnes ist der Vater. Jetzt, da diese Wahrheit offenbar wurde, wird das Rätsel des Geschlechterverhältnisses unter den Menschen gelöst: im Abbild der Trinität kann beides zusammenbestehen: Gleichheit des Wesens und hierarchisch geordnete Stufung. [...] Wir haben also im

The husband, who must always strive to imitate Christ's headship, can never fully reach Christ's perfection. Knowing this, he humbles himself, imitating Christ who humbled *himself* to raise up his Bride, the Church.

In representing Christ, therefore, the husband is burdened because he can never attain Christ's perfection. As the head of his wife, the husband takes on a responsibility similar to that which the Father takes on for his Son's mission of penance and Redemption. Adrienne reminds the reader that the order of Redemption is one of penance for the Father as well as for the Son.²⁰ This divinely established order that Paul articulates in *First Corinthians* is both the *aim of the original causality* and the *original causality itself*. In other words, the Son comes from the Father, the man from God and the woman from the man.²¹ This is the *original causality itself*. But also there is a corresponding "turning back" in each dynamic: the woman for the man, the man for God and the Son for the Father. This is the *aim of the original causality*. Thus, when God created Adam, and before he created Eve, the reality that Adam ought not to be alone was already established. With Eve's creation, Adam's relational character became visible. Furthermore, in the Garden of Eden, it was yet too early to perceive that the mutual ordering of Adam and Eve was ordained in such a way for a further purpose: to be ordered to Christ.²² This further purpose would have to wait to be revealed in Christ's coming in the flesh and in his founding of the Church from his side.

Adrienne explains that when Paul discusses the veiling of the woman's head during liturgical services,²³ he wants to remind the Corinthians that the internal realities and relations noted above also have a corresponding external comportment. By acquiescing to cover her head before she begins to pray, the woman has already established the proper framework for her prayer that is in accordance with the appropriate liturgical order. By veiling herself, the Christian wife submits herself not only to the Lord through the mediation of the husband, but also to ecclesial order and authority.²⁴

In praying with his head uncovered, the man portrays the original condition of Adam before God. As a Christian, therefore, he now affirms Adam's Redemption by the Son. Certainly, as the image and glory of the Father, Christ acts for all men in the imitation of Adam and in the assumption of Adam's role. Because of sin, man has forgotten how much Adam was the image of God. Christ brings this memory back to men in such a way

Geschlechtlichen nicht mehr bloß den Zoll an die vergängliche Natur zu sehen, sondern---so sehr das Geschlechtliche in der jetzigen Form vergeht---einen Abglanz und eine Vorahnung des ewigen Lebens. Dieser Abglanz kann aber richtig nur gedeutet werden, wenn die Geschlechter auf den Sohn hinblicken, sein Verhältnis zum Vater betrachten und ihn selber als Haupt sich gegeben sein lassen. Das Weib kann im Mann nicht ein absolutes Haupt erblicken [sic]; christlich gesehen ist er ihr Haupt nur, weil Christus sein Haupt ist. Dadurch ist das Weib nicht nur nicht gedemütigt, sondern erhöht, während der Mann als ihr Haupt sich vor Christus demütigen muß, um seine Erhöhung zu tragen." Cf. 1 Cor 11, 3.

²⁰Cf. *IK*, 316. Cf. 1 Cor 11, 3.

²¹Cf. *Gn* 2, 22.

²²Cf. *IK*, 319. Cf. 1 Cor 11, 8-9.

²³Cf. 1 Cor 11, 4-5: "Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head---it is the same as if her head were shaven."

²⁴Cf. *IK*, 316-317. Cf. 1 Cor 11, 4-5.

that the glory of God shines even brighter in him than it did in Adam.²⁵

When the man, in his sin, forgets that he is an image of God, the woman can no longer be led by him. Adrienne observes: "His vividness is submerged; it is veiled where it should be naked, and thus the woman can no longer be led by him and can no longer be his glory."²⁶ Finally, Adrienne points out that although the man is the head of the woman, both have an equal entitlement in the existence of Christ. Both man and woman are sinners, yet both are redeemed in the Son and become placed once again within the original sonship. Whether the man prays without a veil or the woman prays with a veil, the content and value of their prayer is the same.²⁷

5.2.4 The Virgin Mary and Christian Spouses

Adrienne also sees in Paul's words²⁸ the role that the Virgin Mary plays in the life of Christian spouses. Adrienne observes that, first of all, it is clear that every man's life is brought forth from a mother's womb. Even Jesus was born of a woman. In fact, Mary bore Jesus in the name of all women. Moreover, the Virgin Mother was not only the bearer of the Son's earthly destiny, but also she bore the heavenly resolution to give the Son to the world. Every woman who gives her assent to a man to join with him and to bear their common fruit imitates Mary's fiat. Yet Mary's Yes is on a higher level, because it is not an expression of nature, but of faith. Adrienne affirms: "She bore the Son bodily, but her body was willing through faith."²⁹

Because Mary received the Son into her womb and gave herself completely over to God, in body and spirit, she perfectly embodies the encounter of all spouses in the Lord: But while Mary finds her femininity in the Son, at the same time, she takes along all generations that follow her: men as well as women. Basically, as the only one, she embodies the perfection of the previous verses: the encounter of both spouses in the Lord. This perfect encounter is reached as a result of the Son of God encountering her in her body. This encounter occurs itself in a counter movement that the Son affects, whereby the Son of God humbles himself to become a man like all and like all to live in the womb of his Mother. But in humbling himself he raises her up to be the

²⁵Cf. *IK*, 318. Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 7. Cf. *GS*, 22: "For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."

²⁶*IK*, 318. As editor of this work, von Balthasar indicates in a footnote on this page that Adrienne does not give a detailed "theology of the sexes" [*Geschlechtstheologie*] in *Korinther I*. Instead, she does this in another work, *Theologie der Geschlechter*, which we will study in Chapter 8. Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 7.

²⁷Cf. *IK*, 322. Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 11.

²⁸Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 12: "For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God."

²⁹*IK*, 323. Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 12. Cf. *MD*, 13: "And--as the Fathers of the Church teach---she conceived him in her womb: precisely in faith!" Cf. Augustine, *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects, The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation* (New York: The Fathers of the Church, 1955) ed. Roy J. Deferrari, transl. Charles T. Wilcox, M.M. et. al., 146: "Thus, Mary was more blessed in accepting the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ." (*De Sancta Virginitate*, III, 3: *PL* 40, 398). Cf. *Lk* 1, 34: "And Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I have no husband.'"

Mother of God.³⁰

In humbling himself, then, the Son gives not only his own body, but also he gives *to* the body of his Mother. Even more, the Lord gives a new abundance to every believer's body, an abundance that is much greater than what was given to Adam. In the Son, the boundaries between man and God are meshed thereby giving an abundance to sexual fruitfulness that points to the infinity of Heaven, however that is limited to the finitude of the sexes.³¹

5.3 *Der Epheserbrief*

In *Der Epheserbrief* [*The Letter to the Ephesians*], Adrienne discusses four themes of marriage: subjection of woman to man; spousal love; the mystery of Christ and the Church and the obedience of children to their parents. In the *Preface*, von Balthasar points out that Adrienne captures the distinctive characteristics of the author's message and person. Whether Adrienne is meditating on the Johanne or Pauline works, or on those attributed to James and Peter, her commentaries are marked by an ability to portray the "missional" concern of each author. Von Balthasar affirms: "The charisms of the first great heralds of the New Testament were diverse, so that the contents of this message might be shown from different perspectives and thus be perceived in their inner fullness, and indeed, in their inexhaustibility."³²

As in her other scriptural meditations, Adrienne reflects objectively and deliberately from one verse to the next without looking back or ahead. Ultimately, she uncovers the meaning of a verse or passage in the light of the Trinity. Balthasar notes:

Everything related to anthropology points to some aspect of Christology, and everything touching Christology refers back to the Trinity as to its ultimate presupposition and explanation. The originality of Adrienne von Speyr is this persistent, absolutely unswerving regress to the triune God, that not only occupies the central position in the whole of scriptural revelation, but also is its one and only viewpoint (*objectum formale*). At the same time, it is fundamentally its all-demanding content (*objectum materiale*): the theme that must be heard for its own sake and that must echo through every motif as through so many variations. Moreover, not only theological understanding, but also the Christian life and God-

³⁰*I K*, 323. One might ask: If the Lord perfectly encounters Mary while he abides in her womb, what happens after his birth? Does this encounter become less and less perfect because the Son is no longer in his Mother's womb? To answer these questions, one must place them in the context of Adrienne's theology of the body and spirit. Certainly, the mere biological-bodily encounter between Jesus and Mary is diminished after parturition and even more after Jesus will no longer be nurtured by Mary's milk. However, the spiritual encounter between Jesus and Mary will continue to grow as Mary is brought more and more into the Son's mission and as she increasingly gives herself over to this mission. Remaining of fundamental and primary importance, Mary's spiritual fruitfulness serves as the basis for further "bodily" fruitfulness. To be sure, she does not bear another Child physically in her womb, after she gives birth to Jesus. But she "bears" multitudes of children as Mother of the Church. Furthermore, her bodily assumption into heaven is another manifestation of the awesome spiritual fruitfulness (encompassing her bodily fruitfulness) that the Lord has bestowed upon her.

³¹*Cf. I K*, 324. *Cf. 1 Cor* 11, 12.

³²H.U. von Balthasar, *Preface to: A. von Speyr, Der Epheserbrief*, 9. [9].

centered ethics require this reduction in order to be authentic.³³

In her commentary on *Ephesians*, Adrienne demonstrates a profound understanding of marriage, the Christian life and sexual ethics.

Ephesians 5, 21-33, the well-known, central text on matrimony will be the main source of our treatment. However, we will take note of other passages where Paul takes up pertinent themes and where Adrienne follows up with her commentary. The division of this section is based on the principal themes of Ephesians 5 and 6: the subjection of the woman to the man; spousal love; Christ and the Church; and the obedience of children to their parents.

5.3.1 The Subjection of the Woman to the Man in Marriage

The subjection of woman to man is understood primarily under the precept that each Christian subjects himself to Christ. Adrienne explains that when Paul exhorts women to be subject to their husbands,³⁴ he has already laid the foundation in the previous verse: Christians subordinate themselves to each other in the fear of Christ.³⁵ This subordination is meant in a general sense whereby Christians practice a reciprocal subordination. Each believer has a regard for the other because each cultivates a *fear of Christ* that stems from the attitude of thanks described in verse 5, 20.³⁶ Love of the other, therefore, requires that one submit to the other. Moreover, Paul characterizes this submission as fear of Christ, that is marked by a distance between the Lord and us. Faith, giving thanks and fear of Christ, therefore, bring about this reciprocal submission that always has its foundation in the Lord and that brings man closer to him. One lives this subordination, for example, when one defers to another upon seeing that the words the other speaks reflect and acknowledge the Lord.³⁷ The woman's attitude, thus, is founded on that of every Christian in relation to the Lord.

As a specific corollary within the general precept, the woman subjects herself to her husband *as to the Lord*. Consequently, her subjection to both the Lord and her husband is to be lived in a unity of obedience. Adrienne notes: "Obedience characterizes the whole existential attitude of the woman. If she has a husband, she has to practice it toward her husband as if to the Lord. If she has no husband, she practices it toward the Lord."³⁸ The woman, then, lives obedience to the Lord in a practical and visible way by subjecting herself to her husband.

³³H.U. von Balthasar, Preface to: A. von Speyr, *Der Epheserbrief*, 9-10. [10].

³⁴Cf. *Ep*, 186. [225]. "You women, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord." *Eph* 5, 22. The verse cited here and those cited in the following pages are translations from the German presented within the text of meditations. In other words, the verses are not taken from the *Revised Standard Version Bible* as in other cases in this thesis.

³⁵Cf. *Ep*, 185. [224]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 21: "Subordinating yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ."

³⁶Cf. *Ep*, 183. [222]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 20: "Say thanks always for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

³⁷Cf. *Ep*, 185. [224-225].

³⁸*Ep*, 186. [225-226].

Above all, the woman's subjection to her husband is linked to and modeled after the Son's subjection to the Father and the Church's subjection to Christ.³⁹ The Son, who lives in perpetual generation from the Father, submits himself perpetually to the Father's will. The Church, on her part, must always abide in the moment that she is generated by the will of the Lord. Likewise, the woman allows herself to be "generated" by the man. Through his courtship, he determines the actual unfolding of their relationship and the moment when she will pass from virgin to bride, the moment that their love will be consummated within the sacrament. The woman, in turn, binds herself totally to the man without placing any conditions on him. Furthermore, throughout the existence of her married life, the woman retains the moment of her becoming bride:

Because this moment—that has its archetype in the moment when the Bride-Church springs into existence—is something so fundamental in the life of the woman, the demand that she be subject flows out of it as an entirely obvious consequence. She should always remain the same woman upon whom the man bestowed his attentions during courtship. And she should always remain the woman who received the gift of bridehood from him. She should not look at the courtship as a moment belonging to the past, that immediately yields to other, more important things, but should make that moment an abiding form of her existence.⁴⁰

While the woman never forgets that she has received the gift of bridehood from the man, the man respects her "virginal" character in such a way that each conjugal act unfolds as if it were the first. Although she is not virgin in the strict sense, the woman remains pristine. She is not virgin bodily, but spiritually.

For his part, the man carries out his role as head of the woman⁴¹ according to the mind of Christ. In modeling himself after Christ, the man cannot misuse his role for his own ends. In the same way that the Lord uses the subjection of the Church to form her, the man forms the woman and, with her help, reveals the Lord to her. Adrienne continues:

Therefore, insofar as she is the body, the woman will always have in mind the life of the Church as prototype. She will find herself mirrored again and again in the various manifestations of the life of the Church. However, she will not conclude that this mirroring goes no farther than herself and the Church, but will see it in the sense that every aspect of her relationship to the Lord is revealed in its proper dimensions.⁴²

Gifted with the task of imitating the Lord, the man must follow him closely. Therefore, on the one hand, the woman's life is guided by the man's leadership, and on the other, the man

³⁹Cf. *Ep*, 188. [228]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 24: "But as the Church is subject to Christ, so too let wives be subject to their husbands in everything."

⁴⁰*Ep*, 188-189. [228-229]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 24. See also *Ep*, 193. [234]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 28. Adrienne returns to a point made above in our treatment of *Das Hohelied*. The man does not forget the humility that he has brought on the woman. He respects her "virginal" character such that each time they engage in the conjugal act, her hiddenness and mystery are respected as if it were their very first encounter. Cf. *Hl*, 24-25.

⁴¹Cf. *Ep*, 186. [226]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 23: "For the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ is the head of the Church, he, the redeemer of his body."

⁴²*Ep*, 187. [227].

obeys the law of the Lord by demanding the subjection and compliancy of the woman.⁴³

By submitting fully to the Lord's will, the husband becomes, as it were, burdened with the responsibility of nurturing the woman's sanctification, just as the Lord bears the responsibility of sanctifying the Church. Only when he conforms himself internally to the Lord's will, can the man sanctify the woman. In addition, the Lord does not sanctify the Church for his own glory, but for the Father's. Likewise, the man sanctifies the woman, not for himself, but for the Son. He leads her back to the Son, purified and made holy.⁴⁴

5.3.2 Spousal Love

Above all, spousal love must lead back to the Lord and fortify the spouses' love for him. Adrienne notes that the Lord "handed himself over"⁴⁵ for his Church in such a way that it is impossible to distinguish between how much the Lord gives and how much of what the Church has received from him she gives back in answer.⁴⁶ Like the mutual giving over of the Lord and the Church, the man gives himself over to the woman and the woman to the man, thereby becoming one flesh. Neither spouse measures how much to give. Each gives him or herself completely. Indeed, the husband loves his wife as his own body.⁴⁷ However, the man loves his body, not because it belongs to him, but because God gave it to him in order to serve him. The wife becomes one with the love that the husband has for his body. The man, in turn, loves the woman within a love that comes from God, returns to God and beholds in the woman, as in his own body, the gift of God's love.⁴⁸

To become one flesh⁴⁹ demands a permanency and fosters an indissoluble union. Adrienne elaborates:

It is not something provisional, subject to free disposition, but something so definitive that it is included in the definitiveness of this clinging. A sort of process thus occurs: leaving, clinging, being one flesh. This being one flesh is not something temporary. It is abiding. Even during the period when the woman bears to term the fruit of the man, the man's body is one flesh with the woman. Dissolution is no longer possible, because this unity is rooted in the spirit, in the bond created by clinging, a bond that clasps them so firmly that they can no longer extract themselves from it.⁵⁰

⁴³Cf. *Ep.* 187. [226-227]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 23.

⁴⁴Cf. *Ep.* 190-191. [231-232]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 26: "To sanctify her, purifying her by the bath of regeneration in the word."

⁴⁵Cf. *Eph* 5, 25.

⁴⁶*Ep.* 190. [231]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 25.

⁴⁷Cf. *Ep.* 193. [234]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 28: "Therefore, husbands must love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."

⁴⁸*Ep.* 193-194. [234-235]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 28. Adrienne places the man's love for his body in the realm of self-giving. He does not love his body in some kind of self-centered way, but he loves his body as a gift of God to be given further to the woman. Initiated by the man, the woman becomes one with the love that the man has for his body. But the man also sees the gift of the woman's body as a gift from God. In other words, one loves one's body precisely in the act of giving one's body to the other.

⁴⁹Cf. *Ep.* 196. [238]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 31: "Therefore man will leave father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

⁵⁰*Ep.* 196. [238-239]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 31.

However, Adrienne emphasizes that the man is to cling to the woman, not the woman to the man. Already subject to the man, the woman does not preoccupy herself with this clinging. The man, however, through his courtship, portrays for the woman the strength of their union. As the initiator, the man keeps the woman from humbling herself spontaneously on her own initiative thereby risking the possibility of rejection. Indeed, the man's humiliation lies in being the first to take the risk that the woman might not accept his courtship. The woman's humiliation lies in her subsequent submission to the man.⁵¹

Ultimately, in uniting themselves *with* each other and *to* God, husband and wife leave space so that God can work in their union. Content with being one, they may not even discuss or understand this reality. Adrienne likens the mystery surrounding two lovers' prayer to that of knowing God's will:

Lovers, who pray together or contemplate in common something pertaining to God, will not interrogate each other afterward over what they experienced in their prayer. Perhaps they will spontaneously tell each other one thing or another, but they will not miss anything that was not discussed. Lovers will not themselves establish the limits of what is to be confided, of what as lovers they would be entitled to lay claim to: they will always leave these limits to the other. It is the same in the knowledge of God's will. Every aspect of God's mystery that he gives us to understand is surrounded by mystery and opens into greater mystery.⁵²

Thus, just as husband and wife preserve the mystery of their coming together in conjugal love, so too they preserve the mystery of prayer that is played out in each of their lives. Each spouse opens him or herself to God and allows him to carry them beyond all boundaries.

5.3.3 The Generation of the Church by the Lord

The Lord gives birth to the Church on the Cross and never ceases to generate her in a twofold process of purification and sanctification. For her part, as the Lord's completely pure and holy Bride, the Church must always abide in that moment when she is generated by the Lord's will. And to be generated by the Lord, the Church must subject herself to him.⁵³ Adrienne explains that generation of the Church by the Lord takes place in two phases: purification and sanctification, whereby purification acts as a precursor to sanctification. The Church receives *purification* from the Lord, for example, in every new baptism where she actually becomes a participant in the purification given to one of her members. Purification leads to *sanctification* in the sacrament of confession. Thus, the Church purifies her members through the grace of confession. And within this purification, she makes them partakers of sanctification. Therefore, what the Church carries out in her single members, the Lord affects in the whole Church.⁵⁴

It is in giving his body to the Church on the Cross that the Lord makes the Church his Bride. And the Church's continued existence depends on the unceasing cooperation of

⁵¹Cf. *Ep*, 196-197. [239]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 31.

⁵²*Ep*, 36. [43-44]. Cf. *Eph* 1, 9.

⁵³Cf. *Ep*, 188. [228]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 24. See also *Ep*, 198-199. [241-242]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 32.

⁵⁴Cf. *Ep*, 190-191. [231-232]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 26.

all believers with the Lord who constantly renews his Church through her members. Here the Eucharist plays an indispensable role. Adrienne reflects: "He who receives the Eucharist receives the life of the Lord, so that he must thereby become a support for the Church, that the received energy might enter indispensably into the Church for the building up of the Body of Christ in the Church."⁵⁵ In effect, the Lord, the Bridegroom draws the Church, his Bride to himself in order to fill her up in himself. He pours out all his might into her to fill himself up in her.⁵⁶

Through the Eucharist, Christians can be called members of Christ's body in a real and fleshly sense. In receiving the Eucharist, Christians are actually incorporated into the Lord and become his members. Also, through her members the Church remains alive and receives new life. However, the Church's members must have the desire to function as one body. Adrienne underlines that all of the Church's members must be willing to be responsible for sustaining the body. Some members who consider themselves inessential cannot withdraw from the Church, but they must shoulder their burden of responsibility as well.⁵⁷

Christians can look to how the Lord cares for the Church to understand how they are to love their bodies. The Lord cares for the Church as her head. He works intimately with her. Thus, when the Church bears fruit, it is brought about by the Lord. By the same token, the Lord uses the Church to bear fruit in his kingdom. And when the Lord must do something as head of the Church, he carries it out "as the one before whose feet the Church was laid as his fullness."⁵⁸

The Church and the human body are similar in that each carry out a specific task in service of the Lord: the *Church* in affecting sanctification in the Lord and the *body* in giving glory to God. Both the Church and the body were ordained for *service*. In this way, one's care for one's body can be likened to the care the Lord has for the Church: both the Church and one's body must be cared for so that they may carry out the task they were ordained to accomplish. Consequently, Christians are to look to how the Lord cares for the Church to understand and appreciate how they are to love and care for their bodies. Above all, Christians place their bodies at the Lord's service just as the Church places her body at the service of the Lord.⁵⁹

The Lord continually generates his Church through the sacraments, especially through the Eucharist and confession. But the Church's generation by the Lord remains a great mystery.⁶⁰ Adrienne notes that it is through the Father's generation of the Son, that the Son generates the Church. She explains: "[The Lord] generates [the Church] by receiving her completely into himself, by continually impressing upon her the attributes of his divinity, and by seeking to draw her into the triune truth that can be perceived nowhere

⁵⁵*Ep*, 141-142. [171-172]. Cf. *Eph* 4, 12.

⁵⁶Cf. *Ep*, 62. [75]. Cf. *Eph* 1, 23.

⁵⁷Cf. *Ep*, 195. [237-238]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 30.

⁵⁸*Ep*, 112. [135-136]. Cf. *Eph* 3, 11.

⁵⁹Cf. *Ep*, 194. [236]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 29: "For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nurtures it and cherishes it as Christ does the Church."

⁶⁰Cf. *Ep*, 197. [239]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 32: "This mystery is great, but I say it in reference to Christ and the Church."

more vitally than in his Bride. He gives over to her his mysteries, but they are always at the same time the mysteries of the Father and the Holy Spirit.”⁶¹ Therefore, created in the giving over of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit, the Church finds the source of her mysteries and fruitfulness in the Trinity.

5.3.4 The Obedience of Children to their Parents

Adrienne observes that when Paul discusses the obedience of children to their parents, he does so within the context of the duties of all spouses. The child is a concrete expression of the parents’ love for each other and ultimately is fruit of their obedience in subjecting themselves to Christ and to each other. Therefore, the child’s obedience to his parents can be said to be fruit of the parent’s obedience to God. In exhorting children to obey their parents,⁶² Adrienne notes that Paul appeals to more than the natural human order. Certainly, children should obey their parents because parents are older, wiser and more experienced. Nonetheless, when Paul says that children must obey their parents *in the Lord*, Adrienne stresses that he is pointing to Jesus who was obedient to his parents, Joseph and Mary. Indeed, Jesus’s obedience to his parents was a concretization of his obedience to his heavenly Father. Furthermore, the Lord’s parents were obedient for they gave themselves over to God so that the Lord could fulfill his mission. Ultimately, the Father’s will encompassed both the parents’ and the Child’s obedience in such a way that no conflict ever arose between them. For children, then, to obey their parents *in the Lord* means to live their obedience as Jesus did amidst his family in Nazareth and during his whole life.⁶³

Naturally, St. Paul places the command for children to obey their parents within the context of the fourth commandment⁶⁴ and yet he explains his exhortation to children in the light of Christ and the New Covenant. The Son manifested his love *for* and *to* the Father by living his whole life and carrying out his (the Son’s) mission to glorify the Father in all things.⁶⁵ When he allows himself to be generated passively by the Father, the Son embodies perfect obedience “just as the child generated in the mother’s womb is only letting-be, complete obedience.”⁶⁶ When Jesus is raised from the dead, he leaves this to the Father, even though he who is God could have raised himself. In his obedience, he allows the Father to raise him, just as he did not place himself in his Mother’s womb.⁶⁷ The Lord gives over to the Church his relationship with the Father, so that she may stand before the Father in reverence as he does. All children within the Church, then, honor their father and mother by the model and grace of Christ’s reverence to his Father.⁶⁸

⁶¹*Ep*, 197-198. [239-240]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 32.

⁶²Cf. *Ep*, 199. [242]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 1: “You children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just.”

⁶³Cf. *Ep*, 199-200. [242-243]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 1.

⁶⁴Cf. *Ep*, 200. [243]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 2: “‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ this is the first commandment with a promise.”

⁶⁵Cf. *Ep*, 200. [243]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 2.

⁶⁶*Ep*, 17. [21]. Cf. *Eph* 1, 2.

⁶⁷Cf. *Ep*, 57. [68]. Cf. *Eph* 1, 20.

⁶⁸Cf. *Ep*, 200. [243]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 2.

A child, on the one hand, has a certain naiveté and unpretentiousness about him that enables him to go freely to confide in his father.⁶⁹ A father, on the other hand, has authority over his child by virtue of having generated him. Paul wants to ensure that fathers do not misuse their authority. Therefore he reminds them to use their authority wisely.⁷⁰ Adrienne reflects on Paul's words concerning paternal authority:

Paul desires that fathers not misuse their authority and that children increasingly learn to understand paternal authority in a Christian manner. To behold in the obeying Son of God the commanding Father. But as the Son has part in everything that is the Father's, Christian fathers must likewise allow their children to have part in their love from the very beginning and must raise them through discipline and correction for their adult life. They should not see this as an ultimate reality but as a mediation between the child and God. Through his upbringing, that leads straight to God, the child must learn to understand that even the life of fathers stands in an obedience to God, and they must grow together with their fathers into the Lord's loving obedience to the Father. As the Lord has formed his Church for himself, in order to take her with him to the Father, so too will fathers strive to form their children according to the mind of the Church, in order to foster their growing up to the Lord in the Church.⁷¹

It is clear that Adrienne envisions that the father be very involved in the raising of the children. Far from a distant figure who has occasional contact with his children, the father "mediates" between the God and the child. In his obedience to the Son, he models for the child the nature of obedience. Included in the father's obedience is the loving service he gives to the mother, his wife. Adrienne underscores how both relationships---husband and wife and fathers and their children---look to the relationship of Christ with his Church as their model.

5.4 *Der Kolosserbrief*

In *Der Kolosserbrief* [*The Letter to the Colossians*], Adrienne touches on themes regarding Christian matrimony that are similar to those treated in *Korinther I* and *Der Epheserbrief*: the relationship of husbands and wives to each other, to the Lord and to their children. Our presentation encompasses Adrienne's commentary on Colossians 3, 18-21,⁷² where Paul treats the themes of subjection of woman to man and the obedience of children to their parents. Adrienne's treatment of these themes in *Der Kolosserbrief* complements that of *Korinther I* and *Der Epheserbrief*.

Adrienne notes that Paul's words, "*Wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting the Lord,*"⁷³ bear out an order between man and woman that is founded in trinitarian life.

⁶⁹Cf. *Ep*, 112. [136]. Cf. *Eph* 3, 12.

⁷⁰Cf. *Ep*, 201. [245]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 4.

⁷¹*Ep*, 202. [245-246]. Cf. *Eph* 6, 4.

⁷²*Col* 3, 18-21: "Wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

⁷³*Col* 3, 18.

This order was not established by God simply for the sake of having order, but it is only valid within the work of redemption. Indeed, by being subjected to their husbands, women are integrated into a hierarchical order:

God formed Adam and Eve both one after the other and side by side. Sin destroyed the next-to-each-other willed by God in marriage, the natural supernaturalness and supernatural naturalness [*natürliche Übernatürlichkeit und übernatürliche Natürlichkeit*] of the relationship of man and woman. Man is established as ruler over woman, who is to bear children in pain. Marriage is founded anew in the Lord. A certain subordination in love remains, but it is blessed. The Son is perennially subject to the will of the Father; as Son (God), he does the will of the Father, he does it as also as man, and indeed so extensively, that men in their ordering can live from it. Subjection is not any longer a forced, agonizing humility; it is sanctification within the Lord, order in his order.⁷⁴

In short, the subjection of woman to man which came about as a result of expulsion from paradise receives a new sanctification in the Lord's Redemption. Thus, the only justification for the subjection of the woman to the man is found in the Lord's subjection to the Father.

When Saint Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives,⁷⁵ Adrienne explains that the man's love for his wife must ultimately belong to the Lord, since both spouses fundamentally belong to him. Manifested in every form of his existence, God's love is given to men so that they may "find an answer to their questions, also to the questions that are posed through their mutual being together and belonging together."⁷⁶ Without love man cannot resolve these questions. Ultimately, the order of marriage is an order of love that is grounded in the Word of God that pervades all human relationships.

Children also belong to the order of love, and Paul exhorts them "*to obey [their] parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*"⁷⁷ Again, just as order in marriage does not exist simply for its own sake, neither does obedience exist simply for its own sake. Children obey their parents for it *pleases the Lord*. Indeed, sometimes they must practice obedience even when they do not understand why they are asked to do something. On these occasions, they must know that their obedience ultimately is understood in the Lord. Adults, as well, sometimes come into situations where they must practice obedience without full understanding. Realizing that they too are children when it comes to faith will help adults to persevere. Just as the submission of wives to husbands belongs within the ecclesial order, so too the obedience of children to their parents. Adrienne summarizes: "The subordination of women, the not-being-harsh of the men, the obedience of children: all belong to the same Church, everything is expression of the same teaching, of the same love for great and small. Heaven inclines in the same way over the earth for everyone. The understanding can be on different levels, but love can be the same on all levels and in all forms."⁷⁸

⁷⁴K, 106. [134]. Cf. Col 3, 18.

⁷⁵Cf. Col 3, 19.

⁷⁶K, 107. [135]. Cf. Col 3, 19.

⁷⁷Cf. Col 3, 20.

⁷⁸K, 107-108. [136]. Cf. Col 3, 20.

Contemplating Paul's words to fathers: "*not [to] provoke your children, lest they become discouraged*," Adrienne observes that all believers need encouragement, especially those who are at the beginning of their journey of faith, as children are. Indeed, God gives encouragement to believers in the form of consolations and an increasing awareness. In order to encourage their children in the faith and to show them the way to the Lord, fathers should be well-grounded in the teachings and customs of the Church that formed them. Adrienne notes that Paul uses the same strong language and strictness in forbidding fathers to provoke their children, as he uses at other times to admonish evildoers. Yet, Paul does not feel he needs to explain in depth all his instructions. Most importantly, fathers are to know that the love and responsibility they have for their children is an ecclesial responsibility that abides in the Lord and obtains its expression and ultimate understanding in him.⁷⁹

In summary, in *Der Kolosserbrief*, Adrienne contemplates husbands and wives in their relationship to each other, to the Lord and to their children. Regarding the relationship of husband and wife to each other and to the Lord, the wife submits herself to the husband in love in the Lord. Subjection of the woman to the man is a result of original sin when the "next-to-each-other" relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed was destroyed. However, in the blood of Christ, subjection is blessed. Regarding the relationship of the children to parents, children should know that their obedience to their parents is encompassed within an ecclesial reality in which it finds its ultimate understanding.

5.5 Excursus: *The First Letter of Peter*

In *Die Katholischen Briefe* I⁸⁰ [*The Catholic Letters* I], Adrienne examines *The First Letter of Peter* 3, 1-7, where Peter⁸¹ treats the themes of the wife's obedience to her husband, the adornment of women and the chivalry of men. Such themes are similar to those treated in other works by Adrienne, particularly those in her commentaries on the Pauline texts. However, this present commentary offers new and refreshing insights into the marital relationship.

Contemplating Peter's instructions to wives to "*be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives*,"⁸² Adrienne notes that the obedience of the woman goes beyond her submission to the man to include his obedience to the Lord. Similar to the way that the Lord bore the responsibility for all believers in his behavior during his life in the world, wives bear the responsibility for the obedience of their husbands. The wife obeys her husband in

⁷⁹Cf. K, 108-109. [137-138]. Cf. Col 3, 21.

⁸⁰A. von Speyr, *Die Katholischen Briefe I, Der Jakobusbrief, Die Petrusbriefe* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961) Hereafter cited as *Ka I*. Originating in 1946, this commentary followed chronologically the dictations of commentaries on *The Letters of John* and *The Letter of James*. Commentaries on the Pauline letters would come later. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, Introduction to: A. von Speyr, *Die Katholischen Briefe I*, 5.

⁸¹Following Adrienne's example, I address the author of *The First Letter of Peter* as Peter. Although it may be disputed among modern exegetes that Peter, the apostle, was the actual author, just as it is uncertain if Paul is the author of *The Letter to the Ephesians*, I follow Adrienne's practice here of naming Peter, the apostle, the author of the letters attributed to him.

⁸²1 Pt 3, 1.

order “to vouch for” the obedience of the man to the word of God. Because her obedience bears with it responsibility, the woman includes the man’s obedience to the word in her own obedience. This responsibility would be overwhelming for the woman, were she not aware that the Church, along with the community of saints, accompanies her and assumes her obedience and its achievement at the point where she can go no further.⁸³

Adrienne draws a comparison between the *Church’s nurturing of a faithful believer* and the *mother’s nurturing of her child*:

It is similar to children’s growth, when a mother has once given birth to them and she cannot care any longer for their becoming and growing by herself: where she has done her part in the name of God, there providence takes on the care for the further progress of the child. And yet this becoming was situated already as promise within the pregnancy. And the responsibility of the mother in God grew there already unnoticed and uninterrupted, over and above what she could do personally, into something that no single person could achieve.⁸⁴

By bearing the *logos* quietly in herself, the wife shows how to live interiorly in the word. The man who no longer obeys the word can be won back to it by the woman’s behavior. This holds true whether the woman be consecrated in the religious life or whether she be married. Adrienne writes: “[H]er wordless way of living in the word, to practice her obedience within the greater obedience of the Church, wins men to the word.”⁸⁵

Commenting on Peter’s advice regarding the woman’s outward appearance,⁸⁶ Adrienne notes that he rejects three types of adornment that ought not to be misused: *natural adornment*, *decorative adornment* and *clothing*. Regarding the woman’s *natural adornment*, Adrienne points out that the woman is naturally endowed with certain things, such as hair, and thus should not exaggerate them. Likewise, *decorative adornment* that is added exteriorly to women’s appearance simply to attract attention are to be avoided. *Clothes*, that became necessary after the fall into sin and, therefore, that partly point to the effects of sin, also ought not to be misused for sinful appeal. The woman ought to have the adorning of the “hidden person of the heart.”⁸⁷ In other words, comments Adrienne: “Christian women encounter in the Church---where the Lord lives in a hidden way---something that lets their own hiddenness be united with that of the Lord.”⁸⁸ In this way, as rock of the Church, Peter gives women this task that is to be carried out in unity with the Lord himself.

⁸³Cf. *Ka I*, 337: “Der Gehorsam der Frau an den Mann erschöpft sich also nicht in sich selbst, in der fraulichen Untertänigkeit; er geht weiter und schließt die Gehorsamstat des Mannes dem Worte gegenüber ein: die Frau hat dem Manne zu gehorchen, um den Gehorsam des Mannes an das Wort zu verbürgen. Sie schließt in ihrem Gehorsam an den Mann den des Mannes an das Wort ein, weil ihr Gehorsam ein Verantwortungsgehorsam ist.” Cf. 1 Pt 3, 1.

⁸⁴*Ka I*, 337-338. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 1.

⁸⁵*Ka I*, 338. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 1.

⁸⁶Cf. 1 Pt 3, 3: “Let not yours be the outward adorning of with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes.”

⁸⁷Cf. 1 Pt 3, 4: “...but let it [the adorning] be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, that in God’s sight is very precious.”

⁸⁸*Ka I*, 340-341. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 4.

To further illuminate his exhortations regarding the outward appearance of woman, Peter refers to *holy women* in general, and to *Sarah* in particular, who serve as models of this hidden adornment.⁸⁹ For her part, Adrienne considers the Virgin Mary:

She has the inner, hidden adornment in perfection, because she bore the hidden Son in herself, who himself bore the Father hidden in him. In her pregnancy she became the visible image of this attitude of hiddenness of the Son for all peoples. And yet the holy women already had possessed something of this attitude, that they received as gift through the law and the promise of God and that they realized in their life under the commandments. [...] The fruitfulness of the women in the Old Covenant was already in this 'being-inclined-to' the Son, as the woman's fruitfulness generally is found not in an enclosed act, but in an 'opening, a being-inclined- to,' while every closing-up indicates sterility.⁹⁰

Adrienne observes that Sarah⁹¹ saw in Abraham something of the coming fulfillment of the Lord. Because she was submissive and obedient, Sarah already possessed something of the fruitfulness of the New Covenant, that would be brought forth fully in Mary. Furthermore, the faithful women of the New Covenant participate in Sarah's fruitfulness and come to resemble "daughters of the obedient daughter Sarah."⁹²

After addressing wives, Peter turns to husbands, and, in particular, to their chivalrous attitude.⁹³ Adrienne underlines that husbands ought to look to the Son for their model of proper comportment. They should be astute, well-balanced, calm and wise in their relations with women. At the same time, the more men recognize their sinfulness and need for Redemption, the more they must imitate the Lord. Men bestow *honor on women as the weaker sex* not because women are the weaker sex, but because they are *joint heirs of the grace of life*. Adrienne explains this in the light of the exchange between the Father and the Son:

Both men and women will inherit the grace of the Lord, who has brought it to all. And here men can refer to the Lord who showed honor and respect for every human life. For every man is a creation of the Father and is to receive part in the eternal life of the Father through the Son. Every man belongs to the Father and participates in his glorification through the Son. Because the Son sees and honors in all men the inheriting of the Fatherly good, thus, more than anything, all men ought to contemplate and honor in their wives the inherited good of grace.⁹⁴

⁸⁹Cf. 1 Pt 3, 5: "So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands..."

⁹⁰Ka I, 342. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 5.

⁹¹Cf. 1 Pt 3, 6: "...as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you."

⁹²Ka I, 343. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 6.

⁹³Cf. 1 Pt 3, 7: "Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered."

⁹⁴Cf. Ka I, 344-345. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 7.

The grace that men and women inherit, therefore, is fruit of the Father's creation of man and the Son's redemption of man.

Adrienne returns to a familiar theme when she explores the mystery of marital life. Man, who is cognizant of the mysterious nature of the *grace of life*, recognizes this same mystery in the woman and can have nothing other than an attitude of reverence before it. The woman stands both in relation to the man and to the eternal life that the Lord offers to both spouses. Therefore, the spouses' *prayer will not be hindered* as they participate in the conversation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who do not know the obstacles inherent in earthly life. Adrienne summarizes: "The man will feel no obstacle in his prayer, when his reverence for the holy God forms a unity with his reverence for the woman, who has part in the eternal life of God."⁹⁵

Adrienne uses the image of the Church as the "weaker sex" to describe how the Lord ministers to the Church, and, the Church to her members:

The Church encompasses in herself the whole weak sex. And where all Christians participate in the eternal life of the Lord, the Church must also look after the eternal life in her members. So the unhindered prayer of men goes over into the unhindered prayer of the Church herself, that, above all, this prayer already constitutes not only the sum of all the single unhindered prayers, but also the independent prayer of the Church. On the other hand, the Church as the Bride of Christ is herself the weaker one, who enjoys the great respect of the Lord. But she enjoys this respect in such a way, that she once again has to minister and to share this, so that, like herself, all receive part in the prayer of the Lord.⁹⁶

Thus, as the Lord cares for the Church, the Church, in turn, cares for her members and the wealth of prayer is built up.

In summary, in her commentary on 1 Peter 3, 1-7, Adrienne shows how by living faithfully in the Lord, the woman can win the man over to him. In her outward appearance, the woman models herself after the Virgin Mary who, in bearing the Child Jesus in her womb, was the "visible image of the attitude of hiddenness." Finally, the man's reverence for God should form a unity with the reverence he has for his wife.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, meditations on Christian marriage in *Korinther I*, *Der Epheserbrief*, *Der Kolosserbrief* and *Die Katolischen Briefe I* have been considered. Essentially, three main themes emerged: 1) the *trinitarian and christological foundations of roles in the family* (headship of the husband, subjection of the wife and obedience of children); 2) the *spousal and familial spirituality* that flows from the God-given roles; and 3) the *Marian-ecclesial dimension* of marriage and family life.

Adrienne affirms that the *roles in the family* must always be understood in the guiding light of the Trinity where hierarchically ordered gradation is compatible with equality of being. Since all men and women are created in the image and likeness of the

⁹⁵*Ka I*, 345. Cf. 1 *Pt* 3, 7.

⁹⁶*Ka I*, 346. Cf. 1 *Pt* 3, 7.

trinitarian God, they inherit certain fundamental God-given roles. The Son subjects himself to the Father. Likewise, the Church subjects herself to the Son.

A certain *spousal and familial spirituality* emerges from the divinely ordained roles of man, woman and child in the family. The *man*, who is husband and father, must strive to imitate Christ's headship of the Church. Because he can never perfectly imitate Christ's headship, he remains humbled before the task. Nonetheless, he must remain steady in his resolve, never misusing his role as leader. He should always respect his wife, body and spirit, as a wonderful gift from God. Loving his wife as Christ loves the Church, the man gives over his whole life for her. Indeed, the reverence with which the man treats his wife must be one with the reverence that he has towards the Lord. For this reason, it is imperative that the husband has a living and growing spiritual relationship with Christ, his wife and children. As father of the family, the man will be able to teach his children the true meaning of obedience through his own example of loving obedience to God lived concretely in the service of his wife and family.

The *woman*, who is wife and mother, subjects herself to her husband as the Church subjects herself to Christ. Her subjection is a concretization of her obedience to the Lord. By living faithfully in the Lord, the wife can win over the man who lacks a profound faith. Moreover, the woman allows herself to be led by the man without placing any conditions on him. Although the wife gives herself bodily to her husband, she always retains something of a virginal spirit. In this way, the time of courtship remains an abiding form of her existence. The woman clothes and adorns herself with a spirit of discretion. She strives to imitate the Virgin Mary who is the visible image of a hidden spirit.

In obeying his parents, the *child* participates in the same Christ-Church union in which the husband and wife abide. Indeed, the child's obedience to his parents is fruit of their obedience to God. In other words, in their obedience to the Lord, parents are a living example to their children. Obeying the commandments, parents are assured and consoled that when they demand obedience from their children, they themselves live as obedient children to the Father in heaven. Thus, parents do not ask something of their children that they are not already fulfilling themselves. Looking to Jesus, children gain a deeper understanding of the true meaning of obedience. As a child, Jesus always obeyed his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, and through them, obeyed his heavenly Father.

The *Marian-ecclesial* dimension of marriage and family life is founded in *Mary*, who perfectly embodies the encounter of all Christian spouses in the Lord, and in the *Church*, who in subjecting herself to the Lord, abides eternally in the moment of her generation by the Lord on the Cross. Mary gave her immaculate spirit and body over to God so that the Son could become man. Her Yes to God is at the same time a *giving over* [*Hingabe*] and a *disponibility* [*Bereitschaft*] to receive. Christian spouses live forth from Mary's Yes and, at the same time, they journey towards it. In other words, they live from the grace of Mary's *fiat* and also model their life after it. In this way, the giving and receiving of marriage become an existential concretization of Marian giving and receiving. The Church, personified in Mary, remains the pristine dwelling place of the family. Abiding eternally in the moment of her virginal begetting by the Son on the Cross, the Church embraces spouses and their children and offers them her unbounded sacramental grace for their sanctification.

Part III: Marriage in the Thematic and Posthumous Writings of Adrienne von Speyr

In addition to twenty-three commentaries on Sacred Scripture, the *corpus* of Adrienne von Speyr's work includes twenty-three "thematic" writings and twelve "posthumous" works. In her thematic writings, she treats themes such as Christian marriage, the sacrament of confession, prayer, the Trinity, Mary, the consecrated life and the evangelical counsels. The posthumous writings, that were published after Adrienne's death in 1967, include insights on the saints, Christ's Passion and theological reflections on the relationship of the sexes.

In Part III, we will examine pertinent marriage themes that arise in Adrienne's thematic and posthumous writings. Chapter 6 treats the theme of marriage as an irrevocable state of life. Chapter 7 addresses the sacrament of confession, prayer and Marian fruitfulness in marriage. Chapter 8 is a presentation of Adrienne's theology of the sexes in her posthumous works *Erde und Himmel* and *Theologie der Geschlechter*.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six: Marriage as an Irrevocable State of Life

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will consider two works by Adrienne von Speyr that center on marriage as an irrevocable “state of life.” Like priesthood ordination and perpetual vows to the religious life, the marriage vow is irrevocable. In *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe* [*Christiane, Letters on Love and Marriage*] and *Christlicher Stand* [*Christian State of Life*], Adrienne lays out the implications of making such an irrevocable decision. Careful, sober and objective discernment of God’s will precede the decisive act; steadiness, maturity, magnanimity and cooperation with God’s grace follow. Although our treatment focuses on the marriage state, it will become clear that it is difficult to examine the marriage state without also observing the religious state. Adrienne often uses one state to illuminate the other and we will follow her lead in this regard. Ultimately, as we will see below, obedience to God’s will is the common denominator for each state of life. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we will examine *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*. In the second section, we will study *Christlicher Stand*.

6.2 *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*

Published in 1947, *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*,¹ is a collection of letters written from the point of view of a Catholic medical doctor (Dr. Adrienne von Speyr) to men and women who are preparing for marriage or who are already married. In the *Introduction*, Adrienne notes that in writing the letters she drew from her experiences gained through many years of practicing medicine with its daily insights into the various forms of difficulties in marriage. Consequently, she is able to present herself in the letters as an experienced Catholic doctor who wants to help those who come to her in their varied and unique situations. In giving advice, she clarifies that she draws not only from her professional competence but also from the teachings of the Catholic Church.²

Written in manuscript form,³ *Christiane* comprises 30 letters divided in the following way: eighteen letters are addressed to young women⁴ who are married or preparing for marriage; two letters are addressed to young men preparing for marriage; five letters discuss the profession of counseling; and five letters concern the discernment between marriage or life in the convent. Although Adrienne did not use subheadings in the work or divide the letters by chapters, she did organize the letters, it seems, in a general

¹A. Kaegi-von Speyr, *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe* (Luzern: Verlag Josef Stocker, 1947). Hereafter cited as *Chr.* Hereafter, Adrienne Kaegi-von Speyr will be referred to as “Adrienne von Speyr,” which represents the more usual and known form of her name. Moreover, to simplify matters, *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe* will be referred to as “*Christiane*” for the most part.

²Cf. *Chr.* 7.

³Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 90. [102]. *Christiane* represents one of Adrienne’s few works that she wrote out by hand. Most of her works were dictated to von Balthasar.

⁴Although the letters most probably deal with actual situations that Adrienne encountered during her daily medical practice, it seems the names of the addressees were fictional. Aware of the confidentiality that characterizes the doctor-patient relationship, she would have wanted to preserve the privacy of those who came to her for advice. Therefore, it is assumed that the addressees’ names, that were used in *Christiane* and that may be presented from time to time in this chapter, refer to anonymous persons.

order. The first nine letters treat mostly pre-marriage situations. Then, a second group of sixteen letters deals mainly with marriage situations. Finally, the book concludes with five letters that treat the “choice of a state of life” and the decision to enter the convent.⁵

6.2.1 *Christiane*, Fruit of Dr. von Speyr’s Life and Work

Among Adrienne’s first works, *Christiane* is inserted in a period of years⁶ following her conversion to the Catholic faith. In the Fall of 1940, Adrienne had met von Balthasar, who was serving as a student chaplain in Basel, Switzerland where she was practicing medicine. With von Balthasar’s guidance, she was able to overcome a final obstacle to her conversion.⁷ Subsequently, Adrienne asked to be received into the Catholic faith. Following her conversion on All Saints Day in 1940, these “middle” years were an especially, spiritually fruitful period in Adrienne’s life and work.⁸

Clearly, the letters of *Christiane*, composed during the first half of the 1940’s, were the fruit of Adrienne’s numerous visits with her patients and of her total dedication to the medical profession. Adrienne always perceived her medical practice closely as service to God and man. Already at an early age, the young woman would accompany her father, an eye doctor, on his medical visits to young children. One time when she met a blind child, young Adrienne asked her father if she could assume his blindness for a time so that the child could see. Furthermore, experiencing her own hardships, Adrienne would later suffer from tuberculosis and other illnesses while she completed her medical studies. Determined to be a doctor even though she possessed little money for tuition fees and books, she would work nights and study during the days. Once she opened her practice in Basel in 1931, she helped countless patients with both her medical advice and spiritual counseling. Moreover, Adrienne herself suffered immensely both physically and spiritually thus enabling her to share in a very real way the sufferings of those who came to her for assistance.⁹

Therefore, *Christiane* is fruit of Adrienne’s ample medical experience, a deep Christian faith and an availability to the suffering that God would ask her to bear during her lifetime. It was also during the period that *Christiane* was being composed that she collected insights and took numerous notes for a book on medical ethics, *Arzt und Patient*¹⁰ [*Physician and Patient*], published posthumously in 1983. Having established the historical background in which *Christiane* was written, we now turn to the contents of the book.

6.2.2 The Principles of Counseling

In the *Foreword* of *Christiane*, Adrienne explains that often many people make a life decision falsely. Only later do they discover that they may have erred initially in choosing a particular path of life. In the letters of *Christiane*, Adrienne hopes to illuminate the problem from different sides so that one can make a clear judgement regarding situations in marriage, the choice of a spouse or the initial choice between marriage and religious life.

⁵See Appendices A and B.

⁶Cf. *NB VIII*, 149.234.346.357-358.360-361.439-440.

⁷Cf. subsection 1.2.5.

⁸Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 27. [30-31]. Cf. subsection 1.2.6.

⁹Cf. *AmL*, 155-160.223-249.291-310.330. [181-188.264-296.349-370.394].

¹⁰A. von Speyr, *Arzt und Patient* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983).

Because of the irrevocable nature of these decisions, clear judgement is imperative in order to avoid making an ill-advised choice. If an imprudent choice has already been made, the counselor can guide the person to recognize how to overcome his own difficulties while always keeping in mind the decision's inherent irrevocability.¹¹

Interspersed throughout *Christiane* are five letters addressed to people who are directly or indirectly involved in giving marriage advice. In one letter, entitled The Discouraged Woman Doctor, Adrienne writes to a colleague regarding the attitude that the Catholic medical doctor must have towards the Magisterium: "*Casti Connubii* is a law for us and the letters of the law stand written inexorably, so you say. I would add: agreeably it is firm, for one cannot interpret it as one pleases to the point that our secret wishes are justified and the law then comes to mean what our patients would like to hear." Adrienne notes that in a certain sense, it may seem that Catholic doctors are restricted in the scientific field, but this restriction is not "disdain of our medical skill, rather it is simply a high regarding of the Church of Christ, which means none other than that God is mightier than man."¹³ The Catholic doctor joyfully yields to this higher law in allowing God to have the final say.

In another letter entitled Marriage Consultation, Adrienne explains how marriage counseling is a special calling, in which only God has a complete overview of the situation.¹⁴ Responding to the counselor's general complaints of discouragement, tiredness and monotony, Adrienne observes:

Yes, it is difficult to love without being able to experience approval, to sow without being able to pocket the fruit in its fullness; and yet it is precisely this that makes your call Christ-like. You should place all that you receive each time at the disposal of the Lord---and in this lies no small amount of grace. So that being up to him, he allows what he desires to become fruitful.¹⁵

To do this type of work requires patience, objectivity and discretion.¹⁶

In the letter entitled The Unwed Mother, Adrienne tackles the topic of advising unwed mothers. Often, in the situation of an unwed mother, the child seems to suffer the most by blaming himself and feeling he must atone for the mistakes of the mother. Not properly understanding the situation only makes it worse. True comprehension, therefore, does not mean that one must reduce the seriousness of the situation, but that one is to be ready to help. Adrienne writes: "The mother must know, that even if the enduring memory of her failure continues to live in the child, she is forgiven, and now she is primarily responsible for the destiny of the child, that must now be formed without the assistance of

¹¹Cf. *Chr*, 7.

¹³*Chr*, 116. Cf. *Chr*, 7. In the *Foreword*, Adrienne notes that a Catholic medical doctor must draw from both scientific knowledge and Church teachings that touch on his area of medical practice. By building a unity between the Magisterium and science, the Catholic doctor can help his patient or advisee to see things in a true light that often contrasts from how one personally and subjectively perceives a situation.

¹⁴Cf. *Chr*, 92-93.

¹⁵*Chr*, 93.

¹⁶Cf. *Chr*, 93-96.

a loving husband.”¹⁷ However, Adrienne observes that many women, had they not undergone forbidden operations such as abortion and sterilization, would have been single mothers. These women, especially, need to be guided to make the right decisions.

6.2.3 Pre-Marriage Advice

Seven of the letters in *Christiane* are dedicated to topics that arise in the time before marriage when one searches for a lifelong partner and then tests the decision during engagement. Therefore the letters touch on the topics of dating, judgement, mixed marriages, differences between partners and purity. We will consider several representative letters.

In Mixed Marriage or Conversion? Adrienne addresses the topic of marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics. She emphasizes that marriage extends to everything that the couple possesses: corporally, materially and spiritually. Consequently, two spouses practicing different faiths would be the same as if each were to speak a language that the other could not understand. Often in the beginning of the relationship, infatuation can cause the man and woman to overlook differences in faith. Later when hardships and disappointments arise in marriage, the difference in faith seems to be more noticeable than previously realized. When this happens, one scenario is that each spouse remains strong in his respective faith and tries to endure that of the other. But a second scenario exists whereby differences bring up so many difficulties that one or both spouses begins to cease practicing his or her faith.¹⁸

In fact, the more difficult aspect of mixed marriages lies not in the husband-wife relationship, but in the raising of the children. Underlining the Church’s requirement that the children be raised in the Catholic faith, Adrienne observes that the strict keeping of this demand is often very difficult as it becomes endangered by the unwilling, yet allowed, sacrifice of the non-Catholic. In other words, not feeling fully committed to the other’s faith, the spouse feels little incentive to promote the faith in any way, much less to teach it to their children. Moreover, the spouses of a mixed marriage cannot partake in the sacraments together, a practice that is a spiritually nourishing and cleansing renewal for their marriage.¹⁹

Of course, the non-Catholic could always convert but it is always a grace that is given and is never to be forced on anyone. Adrienne warns:

Love for a person can become a temporary guide. The loving and loved person can show the way to God, to clarify the direction. However, he must exist as an opening to God, not as if he himself were the final end. His role remains more one of mere mediation, since in order to convert in the true sense, only God can draw one in and change one. The instrument that God needs can be a loving bride at a certain point but [...] this remains an exception.²⁰

¹⁷*Chr*, 124-125.

¹⁸*Cf. Chr*, 34-36.

¹⁹*Cf. Chr*, 37.

²⁰*Chr*, 38.

Thus, although Adrienne warns against mixed marriages, she does not recommend that a fiancé or fiancée convert solely to please the other. Ultimately, the impulse to convert must be provided by God and received by the non-Catholic.

Sometimes, a partner will promise to convert after marriage so that he can live first with the other to know the other's faith better. Unfortunately, what can occur is that when conflicts arise, they are attributed to the faith of the Catholic spouse. The Church then becomes the culprit for any marriage difficulties. In effect, the non-Catholic partner stiffens in his negative attitude towards Catholicism. Out of protest, he learns the faith of his childhood better and protects it, becoming stronger in it instead of converting to Catholicism. Underlining her reservations over mixed marriages, Adrienne concludes: "...a mixed marriage should not be contemplated; a conversion, however, can happen only out of deep religious conviction."²¹

Once a decision to marry has been made, the engaged couple then enters into a intense period of discernment and testing. Mainly, the spouses-to-be should strive to grow in their understanding of the significance of their sacramental union and of their future duties as Catholic spouses. This must be carried out in an atmosphere of honest communication, quiet solitude and objectivity. On the one hand, each partner presents him or herself authentically such that no considerable secrets are withheld. On the other hand, pedantic questioning about each partner's past is to be avoided.²²

In the letter, Engagement, Adrienne emphasizes that the engaged man and woman must be able to distinguish between love and being-in-love. Because each reality is strongly rooted in the other, the task is made all the more difficult. However, one way of distinguishing between love and being-in-love is to recognize that true, constant love does not avoid difficult matters and is ready to make sacrifices and renunciation. Next to love, being-in-love is "like a game that only accompanies the seriousness of love."²³

The future spouses not only must make time for communication with each other, but also leave time for solitude:

One cannot make out the real truth of one's feelings only in the time spent together. In addition, it is necessary to have periods of solitude that grant more integration and objectivity. Then, if something in this light of objectivity appears that is not right (for being-in-love hides much egoism) the most important thing should be that one remain there within the apparent difficulty and go further towards the truth along the path of a deeper understanding of the weakness. One must test and draw out the inevitable consequences, even if they are so difficult and they strike the deepest wounds in one's own ego and deep-seated pride.²⁴

Therefore, the partners not only strive to get to know each other better, but they learn more about themselves, for true love demands knowledge of oneself and one's future spouse.

²¹*Chr*, 38-39.

²²*Cf. Chr*, 22.24.

²³*Chr*, 23.

²⁴*Chr*, 24.

Sometimes a man and woman enter into a dating relationship that is spiritually and emotionally destructive for one or both of the partners. In Breaking Up Is Necessary, Adrienne writes to a woman in precisely this situation. She begins by observing that although the man is somewhat older than the woman, this fact in itself should not be an obstacle to them marrying. Marriages do exist where the husband is somewhat older than the wife.²⁵ However, in these marriages, it is evident that the man and woman complement each other and the gift of the wife's youth is seen as something so priceless that the husband would never take advantage of the woman on account of his greater experience. In these marriages, the wife knows that her husband stands ready to give advice from his experience; however, he offers it only when she desires it. Furthermore, the husband knows that his young wife will learn from the little mistakes she might make in her day to day life. In short, in these unions, the husband remains open to his wife's view of things.²⁶

In the present situation, however, the woman's boyfriend seems to know only his own opinion and believes it to be infallible. The older man is completely negative against God and the Church. Consequently, his attitude has a poisonous effect on their relationship. Because the man demands an ultimatum---to set her love for him against her love for God---the young woman feels she must sacrifice her love for this man for the love of God. Adrienne clarifies:

You want to dedicate yourself completely to this man. This dedication can only be achieved within Christian marriage, where you can share everything with your husband, most of all the faith. [...] Marriage and happiness are not synonymous words. And yet, when happiness is understood for what it is, as a growing in God, then no marriages exist that are without happiness. Contrarily, unhappiness persists in those marriages in which God is not given any role at all.²⁷

In her unique perspective, Adrienne roots true marital happiness in the spouses' relationship with God. Ultimately, God unites man and woman in marriage and sustains them with his grace. A marriage where one or both spouses fails to nurture a living spiritual bond with God risks falling into self-centeredness, egoism and despair.

In the letter How Far?, Adrienne writes to a young, engaged woman on the value of pre-marital virginity. She writes: "Love should come forth victoriously from a struggle. This struggle exists in an important way on the safeguarding of purity."²⁸ By withstanding sexual temptation before marriage, the spouses-to-be will master other difficulties throughout their marriage and they will mature spiritually and emotionally from the experience. Even though the potencies of physical giving in a young person's life are in a state of slumber, they can easily be awoken. Once awoken, they are difficult to control and often one feels justified to follow their heeding. Most importantly, it is clear that mysteries exist in enamored love that concern the body of the other and these ought to be revealed

²⁵Cf. *NB VII*, 286. Adrienne's first marriage was an example of this. Emil Dürr was 20 years her senior.

²⁶Cf. *Chr.*, 40-44.

²⁷*Chr.*, 46-48.

²⁸*Chr.*, 50-51.

only in marriage.²⁹

6.2.4 Advice to Spouses and Families

In passing from the letters of *Christiane* that deal with the time before marriage to those that center on marriage, the reader notes a definite change in atmosphere. In the pre-marriage letters, Dr. von Speyr warns her advisees to distinguish clearly between love and being-in-love, to choose one's partner prudently and, above all, to allow God to have a major role in the discernment. Now that the decision to marry has been ratified in marriage, Adrienne focuses on the irrevocability of such a choice and how to live such a lifelong commitment. Indubitably, the wedding day designates only the *beginning* of the married couple's life together. Certain expectations, obligations and unforeseen events are inherent in the spouses' consent that will require ever greater commitment in the future. Among their hopes, the husband and wife anticipate with joy that God may grant their marriage not only spiritual, but also physical fruitfulness.

Adrienne writes that among the first discoveries that the couple makes after the wedding are those in the realm of conjugal love. In the letter entitled The Wedding Night, Adrienne addresses a young man named Peter on the topic of how he should treat his wife during their first night together. An important fact that Peter must realize is that the beginning of conjugal life is always easier for the man, more natural and matter-of-fact than for the woman. It is even possible that the woman senses a tinge of brutality as she is initiated into the sexual act. Even though the woman has given her consent, she does not know all that it entails; she has no preconceived notions of the man's yearning, desire or haste. Adrienne writes: "She does not know that the man can lose himself in his demand so much that he can forget to look back on his dear wife, in order to desire her giving over as well."³⁰ Therefore, Peter must proceed patiently and slowly with his new spouse as he initiates her into the conjugal act.

In Sexual Intercourse, Adrienne responds to a young, unmarried woman who has confided her apprehensions over sexual life in marriage. Consoling the woman, Adrienne writes that most of the young women who are pure when they marry share her concern since they are giving themselves over to a completely new life that remains unclear. Still, perhaps the woman's anxiety is due to her attempt to completely understand everything beforehand, even though only certain things can be comprehended in marriage. Adrienne writes:

In this way, you reduce love's deciding role that in the end grants its experienced fullness to the act of total giving. It would be better, not only for you but also for your husband, if you would experience this new mystery with trust and love. Then, you will obtain the true understanding of giving in itself as such, as its own gift of giving yourself over.

The consent to be wife and mother is hidden in the initial consent of the young woman to the man. No consent is as open and alive as this one: it calls forth new life continuously; it is fruitful in itself. However, fruitfulness and renouncing go together. Already, the small seed of

²⁹Cf. *Chr.*, 51-52.

³⁰*Chr.*, 68-69.

renunciation in the consent is of a particular private sphere. And the explicit will for the sexual act is likewise naturally included in it.³¹

Above all, God bestows on married couples the gift of the sexual act. But the spouses also are to return the fruit of their love to God “for he gave us life not to be closed in itself, but to be opened to him so much, that we, in the greatest sense, may give again young, consecrated life to him.”³²

In premarital virginity, the spouses-to-be allow the mysteries of the conjugal act to remain untold. Adrienne explains that upon receiving the sacrament of marriage, this last mystery is the first to be experienced. In the reality of the sacrament, much symbolic value remains hidden, for it not only binds the married persons to one another, but also, each singularly and both together, to God. Indeed, the sexual act itself remains a mystery between husband and wife that never fully reveals the lovers to each other. The fact that certain marital mysteries remain hidden in silence is an authentic sign of their divine origin.³³

In the letter *Egoism in Two*, Adrienne writes to Maria, a married woman who has recently become pregnant, a reality that brings apprehension instead of joy. Adrienne agrees with Maria that the new child will change the couple’s life substantially: no more evenings at the theater or weekend trips and no long vacations. But that does not justify Maria’s sentiments which Adrienne describes in this way: “You would like to get out of the imprisonment that your soon-to-be born child means to you; it is as if your body was chained in unwanted shackles.”³⁴ Certainly, with the birth of the child, everything will not involuntarily fall into order. Adrienne warns Maria to avoid returning to her and her husband’s former egoism by closing the circle around the three of them, as if the child would become for the parents an ornament or piece of jewelry for their marriage. In consenting to her fruitfulness, Maria will see how the child is a gift of God. Finally, Adrienne exhorts Maria to remain open to all that her child will bring to her marriage and to be open to any future children that God may bestow upon her and her husband.³⁵

After the honeymoon is over and the spouses settle into their day to day life, we see in Adrienne’s descriptions of marriage and family life that new demands take the place of old ones. With the arrival of children, the spouses’ concerns become centered more on the family as a whole, than on the husband-wife relationship. Adrienne emphasizes the importance of steadiness in marriage as paramount for solid family life: for unity among family members, the education of the children and for learning how to give of oneself. In her letters on family life, one notes the role that friendship plays in establishing trust between parent and child, especially when discussing such delicate matters like sexuality.

³¹*Chr*, 61.

³²*Chr*, 61-62: “In die Gabe des Geschlechtslebens hat Gott sein Geschenk an uns, ein Geschenk der Freude und der Bereicherung, zugleich aber auch unser Geschenk an Ihn gelegt; denn er hat uns das Leben nicht in sich abgeschlossen gegeben, sondern so sehr zu Ihm hin geöffnet, daß wir Ihm im weitesten Sinne geweihtes junges Leben wiedergeben dürfen.” Thus, Adrienne notes that spouses gifted with children are to give them over to God for his further use: either in the state of marriage or the consecrated life. With this, she returns to a theme that we saw in *Johannes* in Chapter 4. Spouses are given bodily and spiritual fruitfulness so that they may give it back to God to use as he pleases.

³³*Cf. Chr*, 63.

³⁴*Chr*, 85.

³⁵*Cf. Chr*, 86-87.

Furthermore, although the husband and wife share a deep intimacy with each other, they maintain a strong intimacy with God, as is noted in Adrienne's letter on prayer in marriage.

In Steadiness in Marriage, Adrienne writes to Erna, an immature, married woman who entered into marriage without an appreciation of its irrevocable nature. In truth, Erna has never had much stability in her life. Shortly after meeting her boyfriend, Erna married. Pregnancy followed and for the first time, Erna realized that she could not control the situation; she could not simply run away this time. Adrienne writes to Erna: "The sacrifice was there, all that was lacking was your proper consent; perhaps you never would have given your consent to marry, if you had suspected its irrevocability."³⁶ When Erna's baby was stillborn, she rebelled. In fact, her rebellion was greater than any words of comfort and stronger than the love her husband has shown for her, a love that accepts her for who she is.

Erna's husband, however, possesses the stability that she lacks. Perhaps, it is exactly this that annoys Erna. Adrienne challenges Erna:

You always want to choose something new and you do not realize that you've already made the definitive choice. The sacrament that you received cannot be dissolved arbitrarily. Perhaps, you did not see it mainly as sacrament. Maybe, it was only a side-effect of your mood to marry, like the organ playing or the wedding dress with a train. [...] You loaned yourself to your husband, but you did not truly give yourself.³⁷

In reality, Erna's life has been a flight from herself. Inner change is needed. Marriage offers her a framework to transform herself, but it is a framework that demands to be filled by the spouses themselves.³⁸

On the positive side, Erna has many endearing qualities. She is intellectual, humorous, artistic, a good conversationalist and understanding of everyday problems. Erna's husband remains fascinated by her: "He is fascinated through what you give him, even more through what you at one time promised to him, that he correctly foresaw in you, but that you always take away from him."³⁹ Reminding Erna that marriage must be built day by day, Adrienne adds that she has chosen her husband just as he has chosen her. In working together, they will find that the sacrament serves as a strength for their marriage. If Erna will be with child again and bring new creation into the world, this too comes from the grace of marriage. In conclusion, steadiness in God is the basis for steadiness in marriage.⁴⁰

Although education in sexual matters can begin at an early age, the mystery of sexuality is unfolded in a slow and prudent manner. In this spirit, Adrienne writes Explanation as a response to a diligent mother who has asked about the best way to educate her daughter about sexual matters. Adrienne emphasizes that raising a daughter and educating her on sexual matters are two integrated tasks because certain matters come up

³⁶*Chr*, 76-78.

³⁷*Chr*, 79-80.

³⁸*Cf. Chr*, 81.

³⁹*Chr*, 81-82.

⁴⁰*Cf. Chr*, 82-84.

in every day life that must be addressed directly and not dismissed. When a topic arises in the daily course of events, it is good to explain it immediately and comprehensively by trying to examine it from various angles and by using language and examples that correspond to the age and development of her daughter. Also, examples from every day life give a vivid representation of the mother's views and help foster the daughter's understanding.⁴¹

By listening, answering questions in a straightforward way and guarding her daughter's privacy, the mother establishes trust with her child. Adrienne notes that the mother is prudent to not always tell the whole story when she senses her daughter would not correctly and completely understand. But what the mother does explain, she must explain truthfully and completely. Furthermore, in trusting her mother, the young daughter should always feel that she can speak easily to her mother without feeling shame for asking the wrong question. No physiological change should come as a surprise to the young woman. By explaining realities such as the menstrual cycle before her daughter experiences it for the first time, the mother helps her child to avoid confusion and even fear. Finally, by properly conducting conversations of sexual matters with her daughter, the mother instills in her a better understanding of her place in the family and prepares her for the possibility that she too may some day be a wife and mother.⁴²

In Prayer in Marriage, Adrienne explains to a married woman that two intimacies exist in marriage: that between husband and wife and that which each partner shares with God. Above all, prayer should not become formal or insistent as Adrienne writes to her correspondent:

Prayer is always a conversation with God and those who participate in it should be able to do it without being forced into odd situations. When your husband and you desire to pray for awhile with each other, you could pray an 'Our Father' or 'Hail Mary' aloud together, in order that each can pray further on his own. Prayers that are formed spontaneously and expressed aloud can easily seem strange. On the other hand, prayers bring you together when the one praying expends no great effort. Moreover, they unite you with the other more through solitude and through intimate conversation with God.⁴³

Furthermore, in common verbal prayer there is the inherent risk that one follows more the thoughts of the other, rather than remaining in a truly expectant, prayerful attitude before God.⁴⁴

Above all, the husband and wife are to allow each other room to grow in their relationship to God. Christian marriage, inserted in the Christ-Church union, offers spouses a sufficient framework for a deepening relationship with God. A spouse does not need to

⁴¹Cf. *Chr*, 13-14

⁴²Cf. *Chr*, 15-18.21.

⁴³*Chr*, 131-132.

⁴⁴Cf. *Chr*, 132.

create new frameworks upon which to base his or her prayer.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the respect that each spouse has for the uniqueness of the other's prayer, also carries over into the realm of the spouses' conversations on spiritual matters. One should not try to force the other to feel or think in the same religious terms. For if the spouse is faithful, he has the right to his own mysteries with God.⁴⁶

In the letter entitled Abortion, Adrienne gives advice regarding a mother of three children who is in the fifth month of a difficult pregnancy. The mother's pregnancy is having a negative effect on a previously unnoticed heart problem. Knowing the possibility exists that the mother, Ella, could die before or during parturition, her doctor recommends that she have an abortion, that would assure the preservation of Ella's own life. Adrienne points out that clearly the doctor's human estimation stands in direct contrast to the Church's teaching. For Catholics, the child is never a random result of bodily union between husband and wife. Every child has a soul created by God and bestowed with a particular God-given task in life. No one can measure how great this task in the Church or the world might be.⁴⁷

Adrienne emphasizes that the Church's law is valid for Catholics and non-Catholics alike: since the Church articulates natural law, *all* men and women must follow her law. Herein lies the Church's mission also: to bring her children to growth in faith, even under sacrifice and renunciation. Thus, the Church may not hold back when faced with difficulty, but she tries to lend understanding and to bear the hardship. Even in a difficult situation such as this one where the three children may lose their mother, one must try to understand the Church's teaching and follow it through.⁴⁸

6.2.5 Choice of a State of Life and Entering the Convent

Adrienne concludes *Christiane, Letters on Love and Marriage* with five letters that, on the one hand, may certainly concern *love*, but, on other hand, may seem to have little to do with *marriage*. These letters seem to concern religious life. How then does religious life concern marriage? By examining this group of letters, perhaps we can uncover the answer to this question. In Choice of a State of Life, the longest letter of the book, Adrienne gives her advisee, Theres, three points for proper discernment of a call to the religious life. Firstly, Theres should not stifle any active voice inside of her until it has been tested. Secondly, she should not confuse dreams with reality. Thirdly, in recognizing her will and desires as her own, Theres must discern whether or not they are an indication of God's will and desire, to which she is to conform. By talking with married friends as well as women in the convent, Theres can get a clearer idea of the obligations of each state by allowing the conversations to orient her, but not definitively guide her. By reading a book or two on marriage and a

⁴⁵Cf. *Chr*, 132: "Ehe und Kirche, mehr noch Ehe in der Kirche bildet an sich schon Rahmen genug, ohne daß die eigene Phantasie auch noch neue Formen schaffen müßte." Adrienne wants to underline that spouses are to find their source of prayer and contemplation by considering the Christ-Church relationship. Marriage does not have to look to the state of virginity in order to determine its value. Rather, the theological underpinnings of marriage itself offer a wealth of spiritual fruitfulness for the spouses.

⁴⁶Cf. *Chr*, 132-133.

⁴⁷Cf. *Chr*, 119-121.

⁴⁸Cf. *Chr*, 121-123.

couple biographies of women who have lived in the convent, Theres can lay the groundwork for a possible awakening inside of her that would later need to be tested.⁴⁹

A clear representation of both states is imperative for making a good choice. One disposition that is lived in both marriage and the convent is obedience. Obedience in the convent takes the form of following the rule. Obedience in marriage is lived in the wife's obedient attitude to her husband, to motherhood and to life's circumstances.⁵⁰ Clearly, the choice should never be a flight from either state. Both states are holy and choosing the convent should never be the solution to the embarrassment of not finding a husband.⁵¹

Above all, should one feel inclined to joining the convent, the love for the Lord must be pure, without false enthusiasm or a feeling of "being in love with Jesus." Both marriage and perpetual vows in religious life are irrevocable. In marriage, latent responsibilities and obligations always exist that only time reveals. Therefore, the ultimate steps towards making a commitment are critical. Adrienne writes: "Neither the novitiate nor the time of engagement are merely times for posing the question; they both mean essentially more. They should have the pronounced character of a probation period of testing that once again clarifies the seriousness of the already answered question."⁵² In the end, Theres must always keep in mind that it is God who asks the burning question and is to him that she must answer.

In the section of letters entitled Four Letters Concerning a Vocation to the Convent, Adrienne explores the situation of Christiane who has decided to enter the convent. Christiane and her friend Sibylle have been friends for a long time, during which their mothers have also built a friendship. Christiane's decision to become a religious sister raises some questions for Sibylle, who is engaged to be married. Sibylle's mother, who seems to be completely bewildered by Christiane's choice, is also surprised by Christiane's decision. Christiane and her mother respond to both correspondents' surprised inquiries with patience and serenity.

In the *first letter*, Sibylle's mother writes to Christiane's mother. She expresses surprise, misunderstanding and disappointment in Christiane's decision to enter the convent. Sibylle's mother asserts that most women enter the convent as an escape from the demands of married life in order "to eke out a wretched existence in the security of the convent." She suggests that Christiane has chosen the state of virginity for fear of marriage. Sibylle's mother asks: "Is it not as if one lives in the past in order to be spared from the urgent demands of today? Finally, is it not quite simply a giving in, a denial in the face of the trials of contemporary challenges?"⁵³

In the *second letter*, Christiane's mother responds to Sibylle's mother. She writes that indeed her daughter's decision to enter the convent has not been easy for her, because

⁴⁹Cf. *Chr*, 139-140.

⁵⁰No doubt the man also lives in obedience in marriage. But since Adrienne is addressing a woman, she concentrates on the woman's obligations in marriage and does not mention the man's.

⁵¹Cf. *Chr*, 141-143: "Auch für die Klosterfrau soll der Ehestand etwas Heiliges sein, und das ganze Geschlechtsleben darf ihr nicht als etwas Unreines oder Qualvolles vorkommen. Beide Stände sind heilig, haben ihre dringenden Pflichten und können in vollkommener Reinheit erlebt werden."

⁵²*Chr*, 144-147.

⁵³*Chr*, 148-149.

Christiane and she have become very good friends. Yet, her husband and she have always received children as a gift from God. Christiane's mother writes:

This thankfulness binds not only our children to us, but at the same time binds our children with us tighter to God. The relationship was for us, more or less, always in the present. And we were fully aware that someday something so fundamental and profound could grow out of this, that one of our children---perhaps several or even all of them---would discern the clear call of the Lord. Then he or she would live only in him, in a relationship that goes beyond relatives and family, because this relationship could not afford any division.⁵⁴

In her explanation to Sibylle's mother, Christiane's mother exemplifies the attitude of a parent who is fully aware that children are a gift from God. Christiane's mother shows that she has always been open to the possibility that Christiane could be called to life in the religious state.

Christiane's mother notes that a woman who flees from marriage would have no place in the convent. Furthermore, even though Christiane's mother and her daughter are intimate, they leave openness for God in the relationship:

Christiane and I are very close, but it is precisely because we are close that we both know that God is yet closer. I must allow my child her intimacy with God and not agitate it with my questions. It does not change our love at all that we have secrets from one another that are in God. On the contrary, it gives to our love the supernatural aspect, that strengthens it initially for eternity.⁵⁵

In the end, with a vocation to the convent, not only the one who is called must discern, but also the religious order as well. In this way, discernment is tested for authenticity.⁵⁶

In the *third letter*, Sibylle writes to Christiane. She writes that Christiane must have been unduly persuaded by a priest or religious or she must have lost her mind. Engaged to be married, Sibylle does not perceive how Christiane could possibly be just as happy in religious life as she (Sibylle) is when she is with her boyfriend.⁵⁷

In the *fourth letter*, Christiane responds to her friend Sibylle. From Christiane's explanation, one receives an impression of a mature, young woman who has made an important decision with a profound awareness of all that her choice entails:

To be sister, bride, mother, all three at the same time. Yes, that is what I would like. I believe that the nature of the cloistered sister is precisely in this unity. Please, do not say this is idealism. I believe that the Mother of God experienced this herself and at the same time established it. We try to walk in her path for the sake of her Son. She is the glorious example, we follow in our weak fidelity.⁵⁸

⁵⁴*Chr*, 154-156.

⁵⁵*Chr*, 157-162.

⁵⁶*Cf. Chr*, 162.

⁵⁷*Cf. Chr*, 163-164.

⁵⁸*Chr*, 166.

Christiane describes her decision, that evolved slowly, steadily and in an atmosphere of silence and prayer. When she was sure of the call, Christiane visited the convent. Although the visit brought conflicting impressions, she felt a feeling of certainty about her decision. Aware of the challenges, Christiane knows that much in her would need to be molded and transformed, but under a spirit of all-consuming service this transformation will be possible. As for her own happiness, the young woman feels assured that God will answer that question before she even poses it. Christiane writes: "I only know that he needs me entirely, even though I have so little to give. And I am thankful to him that he accepts me, that he desires to be satisfied with me. And perhaps he can really use me."⁵⁹

6.2.6 Summary

In our consideration of *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*, we examined four groups of letters that offer advice in four areas: counseling, pre-marriage situations, marriage and family situations, and choosing a state of life. In the *first group* of letters and the *Foreword*, Adrienne establishes the principles of counseling. She notes that the Catholic doctor (or counselor) relies on the natural and supernatural wisdom of the Church's Magisterium to guide him. In difficult situations where a correct plan of action is not easily discernible, the doctor is confided to know that he can cede to the greater will of God manifested in the Church's pronouncements. To those whom he counsels, the marriage counselor maintains an attitude of discretion and professional objectivity. The counselor guides his advisee to the heart of the difficulty, by helping him perceive the situation from various points of view.

In the *second group* of letters, Dr. von Speyr gives advice regarding pre-marital situations. She notes that two fundamental steps constitute the decision to enter into the sacrament of matrimony: *choosing a spouse* and *testing one's decision* during the time of engagement. Above all, the task of *choosing a spouse* is marked by maturity and objectivity as one should strive to distinguish between true love and being-in-love. Among crucial pre-marriage considerations, one's religious affiliation holds paramount position. In strongly warning against marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, Adrienne outlines two difficulties that arise in mixed marriages: raising the children in the Catholic faith and the fact that spouses cannot partake in the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation together, thus not benefitting from their sacramental fortification and healing. Conversion to the Catholic faith is always a possibility, but is to be seen as a divine gift and not something to be forced on a partner.

Once engaged, each spouse-to-be enters into a process of *testing one's decision*. Adrienne explains that a balance is maintained between what one is to share with one's spouse-to-be and what one is asked to reveal. In other words, the man and the woman stand in a mutual transparency, that is marked by an underlying trust that excludes pedantic questioning. During engagement, the engaged persons benefit from solitude in order to test the "movements of the heart" against the "movements of the soul." Sometimes difficult decisions are made during engagement, but these should always be reached with one's love of God as the overwhelming criterion. Finally, in examining the physical relationship of the

⁵⁹*Chr.*, 167-170.

spouses-to-be, Adrienne describes how premarital virginity is a source of strength for married life. On the one hand, the engaged persons do not ignore the awakening of the passions. On the other hand, by waiting until marriage to consummate their love for each other, they will prepare themselves to confront more serious difficulties that will arise in their married life.

In the *third group* of letters, Adrienne gives advice for situations that arise in marriage and family life. She underlines three pillars of Christian matrimony: the *mysterious* nature of the sacrament, its *irrevocability* and the *mutual self-giving* of the spouses. Christian spouses respect and cultivate the *mysterious* nature of marriage, for example, in the loving gentleness that the groom shows to his bride on their wedding night or in the way that a mother teaches her child about sexual matters. The woman's consent testifies to the *irrevocability* of marriage on her wedding night when she gives herself to her new husband without knowing all that will be asked of her. Far from loaning oneself to the other, the Christian spouse gives him or herself irrevocably to the other regardless of the difficulties or challenges that may emerge throughout the course of married life. Finally, marriage consists in the *mutual self-giving* of the spouses, that excludes every kind of egoism. By remaining open to the gift of bodily and spiritual fruitfulness, Christian spouses know that the child is a gift of God that calls forth a response of readiness and openness. The child cannot be like an ornament or piece of jewelry for a couple's marriage, but must represent God's presence in the life of the spouses, calling them to ever greater spiritual and physical fruitfulness.

In the *fourth group* of letters, Adrienne gives advice for proper discernment of a state of life.⁶⁰ Above all, one ought to have a disposition of openness to either state, cognizant that obedience is an underlying element of both. Adrienne underlines that both states are holy. On the one hand, one should not choose the convent over marriage in order to escape from the challenges of living with a spouse and raising a family. On the other hand, one does not choose marriage in order to shun a call to the religious life. The young woman who chooses to be a religious sister embodies sisterhood, bridehood and motherhood simultaneously. Following Mary's example, she gives herself to Christ to be used as he desires.

To some readers, the advice that is given in the letters of *Christiane* may seem out-of-date and even quaint. Because the book was published in 1947 and much has transpired in the intervening fifty years in the realm of marriage and family, one could argue that the book's content is no longer pertinent. In the last fifty years, the institution of marriage has experienced increasingly difficult challenges. Among them are the steady rise of the divorce rate (at least in western countries), the huge number of abortions, the wide-spread use of contraceptives and the high percentage of young people who engage in pre-marital sexual relations. Nonetheless, it is clear that Adrienne's insightful advice remains cogent in today's

⁶⁰Although this group of letters concludes *Christiane*, it could precede the letters that address the period of engagement since choosing a state of life precedes the decision to marry.

world. Although *Christiane* could benefit from some updating,⁶¹ it is permeated by a profound theology of marriage and demonstrates a perspicacious understanding of the human condition. These qualities assure the book's pertinence even today.

6.3 *Christlicher Stand*

*Christlicher Stand*⁶² [*Christian State*], along with *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe* and *Sie Folgt seinem Ruf*⁶³ [*They Followed His Call*], make up a group of writings that manifest Adrienne von Speyr's understanding of the Christian states of life. In *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr*, von Balthasar summarizes her viewpoint:

The Christian who carries it out gives himself over irrevocably in such a way that he can no longer take himself back: either in an indissoluble marriage or---in the counsels---by a vow that is, a matter of principle, equally irrevocable. Undoubtedly, a 'third state' can exist sociologically speaking, but not really theologically. The practical intent of this completely defensible teaching is to bar the door to today's increasingly widespread sociological-pastoral softenings of all definitive Christian decisions---'temporary commitment,' 'temporary vocation,' finally 'temporary marriage,' 'temporary celibacy.' Here, Adrienne remains true to the deeper intention of Loyola's 'Spiritual Exercises.'⁶⁴

Thus, as noted in *Christiane*, one chooses between two states a life: the state of marriage or the state of the evangelical counsels. Although Adrienne focuses primarily on the state of the counsels in *Christlicher Stand*, she does address important marriage themes. In the first subsection we will consider *the Christian states of life*. In the second subsection, we will consider *the choice of marriage as a state of life*.

6.3.1 The Christian States of Life

Adrienne underlines that although two states of life exist *in Christ*, it was not always so. In paradise, there was only one state of life.⁶⁵ In response to man's perfect

⁶¹*Christiane* is available only in German and has been out-of-print for a number of years. If the book were to be re-printed or translated for wider distribution, it could be updated by adding an explanatory Foreword and several footnotes here and there in order to take into account some of the more recent contributions in the area of marriage and family studies. Certainly, it would be important to note some key texts from Vatican II and John Paul II's encyclicals and letters.

⁶²A. von Speyr, *Christlicher Stand* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1956) edited for publication by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Hereafter cited as *St. The Christian State of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) edited by Hans Urs von Balthasar, transl. Sister Mary Frances McCarthy.

⁶³A. von Speyr, *Sie Folgt seinem Ruf, Berufung und Askese* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1955) 2nd printing, edited and Foreword by Hans Urs von Balthasar. *They Followed His Call, Vocation and Asceticism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) first U.S. edition published by Society of St. Paul, 1979, edited and Foreword by Hans Urs von Balthasar, transl. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis. This work centers primarily and almost exclusively on a call to the religious life or priesthood. Because little is discussed concerning marriage, we will not include an exposition of the book.

⁶⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 48. [54-55].

⁶⁵Cf. *St.*, 71. [71]: "In der paradiesischen Schöpfung gab es nur *einen* Stand." With this statement, we see another element of Adrienne's understanding of paradisaical life. In addition to spiritual, bodily, virginal, non-sexual fruitfulness, there was only one state of life. Is this the state of marriage or the state of virginity?

openness to God, God was totally open to man by giving over all his love into the one state. Only later would God's love be divided between two individual states of life. When God created Eve, God's twofold love, as he loves within the Trinity and as he loves mankind, was manifested in Adam in his love for God and in his love for Eve. Created in solitude, Adam was initially unprepared to love another being other than God. With the creation of Eve, Adam is caught off guard at first, but he soon understands the innate, potential inclination inside of him to love another human being:

Somehow it seems that the sudden existence of Eve shook him so that he could not distinguish between his love for her and his love for God, and thus allowed himself to be more easily tempted by Eve. But this love for his fellow man was always a possibility in his existence as man and it became a reality through Eve. Adam learns to love Eve on the model of the divine love: as the other person who shared his human nature, just as the love of God always has its source in his Person and in his nature. Even the mysteries of fruitfulness that will be initiated between man and woman are images of the trinitarian mysteries in God.

This is the origin of the *first differentiation* of the ecclesial states of life. The married state emphasizes the love between two human persons. The state of virginity (that now includes the evangelical and priestly states) emphasizes above all man's love for God.⁶⁶

On the one hand, through his or her love for the other, a Christian spouse discovers a new path to God. On the other hand, through his love for God, the virgin or celibate person finds a new access to mankind.⁶⁷

Adrienne observes that married love portrays divine love as it is manifested in the persons of the triune God, while virginal love underlines more God's love for his creation. This does not mean that the state of virginity offers a less concrete knowledge of the love of the three Divine Persons in God than does the married state. Because of the choice, the opposite has to be true. On the one hand, the virgin chooses God as the true "Thou" in his life and divine nature is revealed to him in a truly personal way. On the other hand, the married person has to find the "Thou" mainly in his spouse. Therefore, God's Personhood is revealed to him primarily through another human person. Adrienne concludes that because the virgin chooses God as the true "Thou" in his life, the state of virginity is superior to the state of marriage, in which the spouse must find his or her "Thou" in the other spouse.⁶⁸

Adrienne underscores that if marriage is rightly chosen, it can be lived perfectly within the Christian faith. Indeed, in their mutual love, spouses manifest certain qualities of trinitarian love and participate in it. Even though Christian spouses are finite beings, the graces of marriage extend beyond these limits. Adrienne notes that it is true that human

This state would have been the union between the two. It was the only state in existence that did not know a separation between the states of virginity and marriage. Only with the fall into sin would a separation take place.

⁶⁶St. 73. [73-74].

⁶⁷Cf. St. 73. [74].

⁶⁸Cf. St. 74. [74].

finitude is evident in the spouses in such a way that the spouses provide each other with a mirror image of each one's own limitedness. Nonetheless, true Christian marriage shows signs everywhere of imitation of triune love and the spouses can gain further participation in this love.⁶⁹

Adrienne explains that the consecrated person has an "advantage" over the married person. On the one hand, because the married person is immersed in the things in the world, he has to struggle to persevere before God. He is more profoundly situated in the consequences of original sin and must rely more on his own strength. On the other hand, those who follow the evangelical counsels are more preoccupied with the things of God by virtue of their life that is fundamentally defined by the counsels.⁷⁰

In day to day married life, when the initial romantic love of courting, of the honeymoon and of early married life begins to fade, married persons depend less on the inherent assistance of their state of life and more on their mutual effort to adapt to one another. In religious life, the state of the counsels plays a role similar to that of love in marriage. Adrienne observes: "One's relationship with God, one's prayer and one's readiness for sacrifice all receive their unique character from the religious state without

⁶⁹Cf. *St.*, 80-81. [81]: "Das hindert nicht, daß im echten christlichen Eheleben überall die Spuren einer Nachahmung der dreieinigen Liebe und gleichsam einer nachträglichen Zulassung zur Teilnahme an ihr aufgedeckt werden können."

⁷⁰Cf. *St.*, 82. [82-83]: "Der Mensch in der Welt und in der Ehe führt einen daurenden Kampf um sein Bestehen oder Nichtbestehen vor Gott; immer drohen die weltlichen Dinge ihn an sich zu reißen und so in Beschlag zu nehmen, daß er den Kontakt mit Gott verliert; er ist tiefer eingesenkt in die Folgen der Erbsünde. Der andere ebet durch die Räte wie durch die geistige Beschäftigung mit göttlichen Dingen näher bei Gott; wenn er sich anstrengt und einsetzt, bleibt ihm Gottes Bild leichter, das heißt, er integriert in seiner Form vieles vom göttlichen, dreieinigen Leben, das, wenn der Mensch mit der Gnade zusammenwirkt, in lebendiges christliches Leben ungesetzt werden kann. [...] [W]er den Ehestand wählt, wird stärker auf seine eigene Kräfte und Reserven achten und bauen." Adrienne's observations that the married person is more situated in the consequences of original sin than the consecrated person and that he must rely on his own strength more than the consecrated person, at first glance, can appear to be a stinging critique of married life. However, she echoes von Balthasar's and St. Ignatius' view on this point. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 398-399. [486-487]: "And one should be conscious that, *for the most part*, *Christian life in the world is more difficult than life under the vows*. For this reason, St. Ignatius established the following rule for one, who in the course of the Spiritual Exercises, is about to choose a state of life: 'He ought to be completely indifferent as to whether he will follow the way of the counsels or the way of the commandments. So far as he himself is concerned, he should be more inclined to the way of the counsels if this is the better way to serve God. Certainly, it requires more obvious signs to determine that God's will would have us remain in a state of life that demands only the observance of the commandments than that it would have us enter upon the way of the counsels; for the Lord clearly exhorts us to the keeping of the counsels, *whereas the other state of life he says only that it is fraught with great dangers.*' " [emphasis mine] Cf. "Exercitia Spiritualia Santi Patris Ignatii de Loyola et Eorum Directoria," *Monumenta Ignatiana*, series secunda, tomus unicus, caput 23, 4, in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (Madrid, 1919). Since St. Ignatius, von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr all underline that the married state, in this one sense, is more difficult than the consecrated state, would they also conclude that it is more difficult to attain holiness in the married state? No. Each state offers a different way of attaining holiness, but they cannot be set against each other as some kind of "competition for holiness." If married life is more difficult on a practical level, for example, providing food, shelter and clothing for a family (to name just a few basic challenges), spouses who rise up to meet the challenges of married life are ennobled and sanctified all the more.

necessarily becoming for that reason more vital.”⁷¹ But if the consecrated person is to grow more alive in the spiritual life, he must *personally* and *subjectively* strive to respond to the graces that are *objectively* bestowed upon him by virtue of living in that state. Likewise, the spouse cannot rely merely on the initial infatuation and love of marriage, but must respond *subjectively*, in his or her *person*, to the *objective* grace of the sacrament.

Certainly a living encounter occurs on the human level in marriage, but it is more difficult to see where or how this living encounter takes place between married persons and the Church. Adrienne emphasizes that both the married state and the Church have responsibilities to remedy this problem and both must strive to interpret God’s teaching for married persons. They each must try to have a better understanding of the inner, spiritual life of marriage and on the basis of this understanding to affect a double adaptation: “the adaptation of ecclesial truth to relationships between the married persons and the adaptation of their human truth to the relationships in the life of the Church.”⁷²

The Church not only nourishes both states of life with her sacramental grace, but also she receives nourishment from them. Adrienne draws on an analogy with the family in order to describe the relationship:

[The Church resembles] parents who beget and raise a child and who receive from him a lively, new spirit for their marriage. This spirit perhaps will be expressed later in the begetting of more children. But [the Church resembles them] even more, in the fact that, having experienced the stimulus and living impulses they received from the child, the parents let these redound to the child’s own good.⁷³

Indeed, the Church not only receives from God the power to bring forth children in baptism and to nurture them in the faith and the other sacraments, but also she must be open to receiving new life from these children. A Church that only desired to evangelize new peoples, but that did not expect to receive enrichment from them would fail in her mission to be the Bride of Christ.⁷⁴

⁷¹Cf. *St.*, 118. [119]. Adrienne draws a parallel between the stabilizing nature of the rule of the religious life and the stability of the sacramental bond of marriage. The rule serves as a framework within which the religious lives. He knows that there are certain minimum requirements he needs to fulfill. For example, the Benedictine monk will need to attend the common daily prayers of the liturgy of the hours. But he must go beyond the minimum to really live a holy life. Likewise, the married person knows that he or she has promised to be true to his or her spouse “in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health” and to love and honor one another for life. This promise remains the framework, but the real “loving and honoring” is carried out in the concrete, daily situations that arise in marriage. Certainly, it would be helpful for the spouse to recall what has been promised on the wedding day. But the promise demands a giving over that knows no limits or calculation that “what I do today or in this situation is good enough.”

⁷²*St.*, 162. [163]. Here, Adrienne refers to the need for a theology of marriage that is based on a trinitarian, christological and ecclesial understanding of marriage. This is precisely what Adrienne proposes in her writings on marriage. If spouses are to truly understand what it means to be inserted in the Christ-Church union through the sacrament of marriage, they must understand each component of this union: Christ, Trinity, Church. Belonging to the Catholic Church means more than belonging to some kind of fraternity or club. One belongs in a *bodily* way where the Lord is head and believers are the body. This bodiliness is lived in marriage in a way that is both spiritually and bodily fruitful.

⁷³*St.*, 169. [169].

⁷⁴Cf. *St.*, 169. [169].

6.3.2 The Choice of Marriage as a State of Life

As Adrienne notes in several letters throughout *Christiane*, before a man and woman decide to marry each other, each should have already discerned individually whether or not it is really God's will to marry in the first place.⁷⁵ In *Christlicher Stand*, she returns to the theme of choosing marriage as a state of life. Noting that many people enter into marriage without really choosing it, Adrienne stresses the importance of making the choice for marriage in an atmosphere of objectivity, prayer and careful discernment. A choice should be made in prayer, "either during or outside of spiritual exercises."⁷⁶ She notes that it is difficult to determine how many make spiritual exercises as objectively as they should or even make them at all.⁷⁷ Clearly, if everyone did make spiritual exercises before deciding to marry there would be many more who would choose to follow Christ in the state of the counsels.⁷⁸

Often, one makes the choice to marry only after having already fallen in love. This can lead to a precarious situation as Adrienne explains:

Often, the erotic experience that belongs to human nature plays a decisive role at the time of choice. A man is in love with a young woman or is made uneasy by his own feelings of desire. Hence he approaches the choice already with a certain predetermination. He is not free and unhampered, but somehow bound, even if he is not yet actually engaged. He makes his choice initially because the young woman is there.⁷⁹

Later, when he makes a retreat or the spiritual exercises, he has a chance to see his situation more objectively and he realizes that his choice was not a truly Christian one. However, at this point, he has already made a choice and carried it out. Perhaps, he already has a wife and children. Now, he has to try to make the best of the situation. Even though he has chosen in a misguided way, his honest assessment of the situation at this juncture helps him to realize that he is much more dependent on God's love than he had expected. Despite his earlier mistake, he has hope that God's grace will completely transform his chosen path.⁸⁰

Once one has made his choice to marry, he gives himself over to God regardless of the ease or difficulty inherent in the state of life he has chosen. Already at this time, his new relationship to God must be evident in his person, as he allows God to mold him. A certain immediacy and defenselessness characterizes his relationship to God. By carrying out a sort of housecleaning before God, he looks at everything not knowing what will be useful later

⁷⁵Cf. *Chr*, 7.22-26.34-39.50-53.97-101.134-137.

⁷⁶Cf. *St*, 94. [94-95]. Adrienne does not specify the nature of the "spiritual exercises." [*Exerzitien*] However, she would have been familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. During the second week of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, there is an emphasis on making a choice for a state of life.

⁷⁷Adrienne reflects on the situation of the man who spurns a call to the priesthood: "He who really should have become a priest will not [...] inevitably become an ideal married man. He cannot claim to be in the place God wanted him to be. Because human beings always seek ways to shirk responsibility, they will always devise new reasons for doubting the actual necessity of a choice and, also in certain cases, for justifying their failure to make such a choice. It is inconceivable how big the circle is that encloses those who have fallen into error through these tactics." *St*, 174-175. [175].

⁷⁸Cf. *St*, 31. [32].

⁷⁹*St*, 142. [142].

⁸⁰Cf. *St*, 142-143. [142].

in marriage. He cleans, orders and throws out what he deems will not be useful or what can even be harmful in marriage. Later, his spouse and the routine of family life will assume this function of molding him and bring fruitfulness and vitality to their life together.⁸¹ At this point his old life ceases and he passes through a kind of death to a new birth.⁸²

If one has decided to marry, his decision should permeate both his interior and exterior life. Even before marriage, he must be serious about the demands he intends to make on himself and his wife. He should not revert to a type of bachelor existence as if he had never decided to marry. Therefore, he should not associate with only his male friends; nor should he live alone.⁸³ Most probably he would have made his decision to marry based on both negative and positive reasons. Negatively, perhaps he decided to marry because he could not imagine living in obedience or experiencing the loneliness of the celibate life. Positively, maybe he decided to marry because he could see his future marriage as a participation in building a community of love that was ordained by God and will be fructified by him.⁸⁴

A decision to marry does not begin and end with the choice, but spouses should evaluate themselves now and then to determine how well they have lived up to the expectations of God, of the Church and of themselves. Often, a man and a woman decide to marry when they are infatuated with each other. Thus, after several years of marriage, it would be good to see if this infatuation was also accompanied by true love. The husband and wife can discern whether their marriage has endured throughout the hardships of the years, whether their life together has been blessed spiritually, if not also physically, and whether God still has a prominent place in their daily lives:

In marriage, it is also easier [compared to the state of virginity] to discover where disappointments began and therefore where the mistakes have crept in. The marriage did not fulfill its promise, or one or the other spouse did not do so, insofar that one would repeatedly put off its fulfillment until tomorrow. In making this choice, the married man was determined to lead a fruitful life in God, to have a family life, have a profession and practice his faith responsibly before God. How much of this never came to pass! Perhaps this wife, these children, would have remained closer to God if they had had a different husband and father.⁸⁵

⁸¹Adrienne writes of this vitality elsewhere. Cf. *St.*, 96. [96-97]: "In every family, with the birth of a new child there is a new shift in the balance that recalls earlier shifts, the first of which took place with the sealing of the marriage bond. In marriage everything is new. Then the first child comes and everything is new all over again, and so it is with each time. In marriage, the ability to renew and to arouse from slumber stems from its own fruitfulness, that in turn is founded on the antecedent fruitfulness of the decision to marry, of the Christian marriage preparation, of the time of engagement and of the marriage itself."

⁸²Cf. *St.*, 50-51. [51-52].

⁸³If one has decided to marry, he has made a decision to live in communion with another. The time before marriage can be a preparation for this: not by living with another of the opposite sex, but by living with one's parents, a sibling or with a few friends of the same sex. Living in community, one fosters a spirit of self-giving that serves as a "training" for future life in the state of marriage.

⁸⁴Cf. *St.*, 34-35. [35].

⁸⁵*St.*, 158. [158-159].

Therefore, Adrienne places on the spouse a certain responsibility for the other family members' relationship to God. The more authentically the spouses are able to live the promises made on their wedding day, the more they will serve as instruments for drawing each other and their children into a deeper relationship with God.

Above all, it is clear that one who has made a Christian choice to marry can be identified by his willingness to witness to the goodness of the married state to all those around him. He testifies to Christians who have not really understood their marriage as a vital organ of the Church and he testifies to those who have never even really considered the question of marriage as a state of life. More than anything, he wants to witness to the sanctity of marriage.⁸⁶

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe* and *Christlicher Stand*. The letters of *Christiane* offer advice in the areas of marriage preparation, spiritual direction, marriage counseling and general pastoral care. In the thirty letters, Dr. von Speyr combines an incisive understanding of human nature with an insightful theology of marriage. Addressing a number of situations and issues that arise in the remote, proximate and immediate stages of marriage preparation, Adrienne stresses that one make mature, prayerful and well-discerned choices. If one does not discern God's call to the religious state, one can choose marriage with the reassurance that one's path of holiness lies in the marriage state. Thus, the choice of a spouse is to be shaped by one's desire to live a holy life. In marriage, each spouse is sanctified through the magnanimous gift of oneself to the other, the openness to God-given spiritual and bodily fruitfulness and the reverence for the body and spirit of the other.

In the two works we have studied in this chapter, Adrienne presents a framework for a theology of the *Christian states of life*. Marriage and virginity are two states of living one's call to Christian holiness. Each complements the other; each helps understand the natural and supernatural realities of the other. In each state, a tension exists between the *subjective* person and the *objective* rule or institution. The consecrated person follows an objective rule. The married person finds objectivity in the institution of the sacrament. In their complementary co-existence and collaboration, both states of life bear fruit in the Church and in the world.

⁸⁶Cf. *St.*, 94, [94]: "Daß einer sie christlich gewählt hat, merkt man daran, daß er den Drang hat, den kirchlichen Stand der Ehe auch seiner ganzen Umgebung neu zu zeigen. Nicht nur den zahlreichen Ehen von Christen, die kirchlich nicht erfaßt worden sind, auch denen, für die sich das Problem der Ehe als christlicher Stand nie ernsthaft gestellt hat. Er möchte die Heiligkeit der Ehe beweisen helfen." With this, Adrienne underlines the sanctity of marriage.

Chapter Seven: The Sacrament of Confession, Prayer and Marian Fruitfulness in Marriage

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine insights that Adrienne offers in the realm of the spiritual and sacramental life of Christian spouses and families. The Holy Family, in general, and the Blessed Virgin, in particular, are fundamental models for the spiritual life of all Christian families. Therefore, we include here pertinent insights on Mary, Jesus and Joseph, as well as Adrienne's reflections on the spiritual companionship of Mary and John, the apostle. Several themes will be presented: the sacraments of confession and Eucharist in the spousal relationship; individual and common prayer in the family; the growth of prayer in the children and in the family; prayer and discernment; the relationships of Mary and Joseph and Mary and John; and Mary as the model for each state of life. Divided into three main sections, this chapter gives a presentation of Adrienne's theology of marriage as presented in the works *Die Beichte*, *Die Welt des Gebetes* and *Magd des Herrn*.

7.1 Die Beichte

*Die Beichte*¹ [*Confession*] represents a comprehensive collection of insights on the sacrament of confession that Adrienne dictated to von Balthasar between October and December of 1948. Although the work mainly ponders confession from the viewpoint of the Trinity and the individual penitent, Adrienne does examine the sacrament as it is realized and practiced in the heart of the spousal relationship.

Upon the publication of *Die Beichte* in 1960, von Balthasar discussed the centrality of the sacrament of confession in Adrienne's writings:

It is clear from a examination of Adrienne von Speyr's heretofore published works that her book on confession is one of her most central works. In particular the great commentary on John, but also the book on prayer, the one on Mary, the one on the Passion in Matthew---indeed all her books---revolve around the act and attitude of confession, around the personal and ecclesial-sacramental encounter between sinner and God, around that total openness that is the premise for all blessing, mission and prayer.²

The sinner's attitude of "total openness" before God is one which we have noted in several of the works already considered. One humbly reveals one's sins to God in a spirit of vulnerability so that in one's nakedness, one may be clothed by God's abundant mercy and grace.

Balthasar explains that the unique aspect of Adrienne's understanding of confession lies in her perspective that when Catholics confess their sins, they are imitating Christ on the Cross. He writes: "The Cross (and with it the entire Incarnation of the Son) is the

¹A. von Speyr, *Die Beichte* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960) Second edition 1982. Hereafter cited as *Be. Confession* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985) translated by Douglas W. Stott.

²H.U. von Balthasar, *Editor's Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Die Beichte*, 7. [9].

archetypal confession, and Christian sacramental confession thus is a following of Christ in the strict sense.”³ In a first movement, Christ “confesses” in an archetypal way on the Cross. In a second movement, the Christian follows Christ in sacramental confession. Hanging unclothed on the Cross and “weighted down” by man’s sin, Christ “confesses” our sins to the Father in our name. Drawing from the infinite grace of Christ’s Passion, death and Resurrection, the penitent follows Christ by confessing his sins in a spirit of naked transparency before the Lord.⁴

The act of confessing one’s sins often becomes an exercise in which one places oneself at the center of the dialogue with the priest confessor. In good faith, one believes that by conducting a thorough diagnostic examination, one can derive a formula that will bring about a calmness in spirit and virtuous, holy living.⁵ Certainly, it is imperative that the penitent make a thorough examination of conscience. However, if the emphasis is always placed on the subjective person, the penitent fails to view one’s own sin from an objective standpoint. Unable to separate himself from his sin, the penitent falls into despair. But when the penitent acknowledges responsibility for his sin, while also recognizing that Jesus Christ is in solidarity with him, the penitent can find consolation. Knowing that his sins die with Christ’s death on the Cross, he receives new life with absolution and Christ’s Resurrection. Thus, above all, Adrienne’s theology of confession underlines the importance of the centrality of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of confession in all its dimensions: examination of conscience, confession, contrition, absolution, penance and saintly living.

Von Balthasar writes that, in *Die Beichte*, Adrienne examines the christological and trinitarian elements of confession as a *sequela Christi* from various points of view and makes a number of observations that are speculative, but also practical in nature.⁶ We will consider those speculative and practical observations that Adrienne makes regarding confession in the realm of the state of marriage. In the first subsection, we will examine the general theme of confession of married persons. In the second subsection, we will address transgression and forgiveness between spouses.

7.2.1 Confession of Married Persons

In the confession of marriage persons, it is evident that the sins of the husband and wife are often intertwined. Because husband and wife share a life of profound intimacy, it is not always easy or even possible to individualize their sins. In effect, spouses often sin in common. It is true that transgressions can be committed by only one of the partners, for example, when one holds back from giving totally of oneself, while the other gives oneself over completely. However, Adrienne notes that also one’s giving over can be sinful if it is done in an egotistical way. Furthermore, other situations exist where one of the spouses sins and even though the other may not participate directly in the sin, this spouse may tacitly

³H.U. von Balthasar, *Editor’s Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Die Beichte*, 7. [9].

⁴Cf. W. Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a “Sequela Christi” in the Writings of A. von Speyr*, 7. Cf. B. Albrecht, *Eine Theologie des Katholischen, Einführung in das Werk Adrienne von Speyrs, Band II, Darstellung*, 132-134.

⁵Cf. Paola Ricci Sindoni, *Adrienne von Speyr, Storia di una esistenza teologica*, 142.

⁶H.U. von Balthasar, *Editor’s Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Die Beichte*, 7-8. [9-10].

approve of it.⁷

If the sins of the spouses are intertwined, then their confessions often are as well. For example, when the husband goes into the confessional, often he not only confesses his own sins against his wife, but also he inevitably, either directly or indirectly, accuses his wife of transgressing against him. When the wife confesses, she too confesses her own sins, but no doubt she acknowledges those times when she felt sinned upon by her husband. Consequently, the confession of the one spouse announces in advance that of the other. However, Adrienne asserts that if both spouses confess properly, they will understand that their confessions could not have been otherwise. In other words, each spouse could surmise, to a certain extent, some details of the other's confession. Each knows that his confession is intertwined with the other's and that in this mutual bearing the other's sin, each participates, albeit in much reduced way, in the Lord's act of bearing sin. Moreover, to a certain extent, the priest knows ahead of time the confession of one spouse through the confession of the other. Consequently, his exhortation and absolution, that he gives to the one spouse, anticipates the exhortation and absolution he will give to the other.⁸

Certainly, the husband is humbled when he knows that his wife, in her confession, indicates his sins against her. This humiliation is also felt by the wife when the husband confesses. Also, each is humbled in not knowing exactly how his or her transgression will be confessed by the other. Will the offense be exaggerated? Did he underestimate how much her feelings were hurt by such and such a sin? Perhaps, these thoughts go through their heads. In any case, in confession, each spouse stands naked before God, allowing him to enter into the most intimate sphere of married life. However, Adrienne notes that every sacrament expresses the omnipresence of God in human life. She writes: "[T]his is true even

⁷Cf. *Be*, 157. [144]. In this paragraph, at least four cases of "spousal sin" are outlined. A) The spouses are mutually complicit in sin. B) In giving oneself over to one's spouse, one has ulterior motives that are not entirely pure. C) One spouse sins. D) One spouse sins, but the other tacitly participates. For cases A and C, one could derive some clear-cut examples. Cases B and D are more nuanced. One example of Case B would be if one spouse did something special for the other, just so that the spouse could ask something in return. Thus, the spouse places conditions on his or her self-giving. Obviously, sin comes in all varieties and Case D would be no exception. However, in the realm of the conjugal relationship, one could imagine the situation where one spouse were to use a contraceptive or prophylactic and the other would tacitly approve. This example of Case D can also become more complex. For example, if one spouse "X" were to use a contraceptive or prophylactic and the other "Y" did not approve. But when Y attempts to persuade X to discontinue the evil act, Y is threatened with violence. In this case, Y's cooperation would not be sinful. These cases of cooperation can be quite complex and demand a more detailed explanation that goes beyond the scope of this work. However, it is important to indicate the potential difficulties and complexities. Cf. *CC*, AAS 22 [1930], 561: "Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case, there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin." Cf. Pontifical Council for the Family, *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life*. From the *Introduction*: "[...] this document is addressed specifically to confessors and seeks to offer some practical guidelines for the confession and absolution of the faithful in matters of conjugal chastity. [...] [It] intends also to offer a reference point for married penitents so that they can draw ever greater advantage from the practice of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and live their vocation to responsible parenthood in keeping with divine law, authoritatively taught by the Church. It will also serve as an aid to those who are preparing for marriage."

⁸Cf. *Be*, 157-158. [144].

of sacraments that we do not receive ourselves, ones we participate in only through the communion of saints and sinners.”⁹

The sacraments, and especially confession, help the Christian spouses move from the *communion of sinners* to the *communion of saints*. Adrienne explains from the point of view of a spouse:

If you show God our sin as one we have committed together, then it becomes almost impossible to draw a clear boundary between what is yours and what is mine. And one understands that if evil is capable of such a communion, this would be even more true of good. This also holds true for the good that comes from absolution. The sacraments have an overflowing effect; they transcend the sphere that they externally seem to delimit.¹⁰

Therefore, in their confession, husband and wife realize how deeply they are united in Christ by the sacrament. As each spouse bears his own sin and, at the same time, often bears the marks of the other’s transgressions against him, each experiences in a small way what Christ went through on the cross.¹¹ Jesus was sinless, therefore he did not bear his own sins. But he did bear our sin, for us, for all time.¹²

Ultimately, Christian spouses are able to understand part of their mutual love, but the rest remains shrouded in God’s mysteries. Yet, through the sacrament of confession, the spouses should grow deeper in their love for each other. Adrienne writes: “While the one spouse includes the other in his confession, through the Church, God ties the bond of love even more tightly making the relationship deeper and richer. And the confession of one

⁹Cf. *Be*, 158. [144-145]. Cf. *RP*, 16. John Paul II speaks of the effects of social sin, but also of the possibility of rising above sin, with the help of sacramental grace, to be united with the communion of saints: “To speak of social sin means in the first place to recognize that, by virtue of human solidarity that is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual’s sin in some way affects others. This is the other aspect of that solidarity that on the religious level is developed in the profound and magnificent mystery of the communion of saints, thanks to which it has been possible to say that ‘every soul that rises above itself, raises up the world.’ ”

¹⁰*Be*, 158. [145]. It can be said that each spouse brings into marriage his or her own past. In a certain sense, God gives the spouses to each other in order that they, together, can be transformed in his grace. Each partner serves as “sandpaper” for the other in the smoothing and polishing that is included in the process of sanctification. It is the special grace of confession that is indispensable to this process.

¹¹Cf. *Be*, 158. [145].

¹²Cf. W. Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a “Sequela Christi” in the Writings of A. von Speyr*, 113-114. Schmitt clarifies that Adrienne affirms Christ’s sinlessness, but with “her characteristically paradoxical language: ‘Er ist jetzt der Mensch, der alle Sünde auf sich geladen hat, obwohl er selber unschuldig ist.’ ” (*Jo IV*, 125. [104].) Schmitt notes that St. Augustine made the distinction between *culpa* and *pena*. Thus, Christ bore the *pena* (punishment) of our guilt, but not the *culpa* (fault) itself. In *Sermo Guelferbytanus*, 31:1 (*PLS* 2:632), Augustine notes that man’s guilt is personal and not shared by Christ. But Schmitt warns: “The Augustinian distinction cannot be rendered absolute because there is an intrinsic relationship between guilt and punishment. Otherwise the latter would be merely an arbitrary divine decree and accepting punishment would not necessarily effect guilt.” Cf. Augustine, *Sermons, III/9 (306-340A) on the Saints, The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1994) ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., translation and notes by Edmund Hill, O.P., 216: “So he came, and he found us lying fallen in both the fault and its punishment; he took upon himself only the punishment, and released us both from the fault and the punishment.”

spouse, that gives new order to his own relationship to God, also allows the other partner to become aware of a new obligation to God and, in God, to his spouse."¹³

7.2.2 Transgression and Forgiveness in Marriage

When one offends another, how can reconciliation and growth occur in the relationship? Adrienne explores this question in a general way when she proposes several situations of transgressions between two friends. We adopt her line of reasoning here, but we examine it within the context of two spouses.

Firstly, Adrienne explains that when a spouse has offended his partner, he cannot merely admit his guilt and excuse himself. He must show some signs of his contrition. Most probably, he realizes that his alienation from his spouse was due to something that did not arise all of a sudden, but he knows that he had been distant and half-hearted about their relationship for some time. When the offended person begins to see signs of a true change of heart and new signs of love in him, the relationship can move forward. However, now the two lovers do not begin where they left off. They pick up their relationship again on a higher and more intimate level.¹⁴

Secondly, it can also happen that when one offends the other, he is not particularly bothered by his sin. He justifies or tries to excuse himself or perhaps offers a weak apology, trying to carry on as if nothing had happened. In this case, the one offended, who is inclined to forgive, cannot offer forgiveness. If it were to be offered, it would not be recognized as such, because the offender had not first asked for it. It is as if the offender were not only blind to his offense, but also he has now made himself blind to his partner's willingness to forgive. In a case such as this, the partners cannot pick up the relationship where it left off; they can only begin again at a lower level.¹⁵

Thirdly, a situation may arise when the offender does not even try to excuse himself at all. He simply watches to see what will happen. He may have a slightly bad conscience, but he thinks things will be alright if they continue as they were. Next time he sees his spouse, he will pretend that things that came between them were not meant to be taken so seriously. In short, he tries to downplay the severity of his offense.¹⁶

Adrienne presents these last two situations to show how a spouse can close oneself off from God and from the other. When the sinner offends and then does not recognize his offense, he shows that he wants to stay in control. Furthermore, he feels no need to be contrite before God. Eventually, this offender will block himself completely off from God, and, in marriage, from the offended spouse. Only true contrition can bring life to one who has cut oneself off from God and from his or her spouse.¹⁷ However, in order to effect true contrition, one must first be willing to humble oneself and allow God's grace ultimate control.

¹³*Be*, 158-159. [145].

¹⁴*Cf. Be*, 182-183. [166-167].

¹⁵*Cf. Be*, 183. [167].

¹⁶*Cf. Be*, 183. [167].

¹⁷*Cf. Be*, 183-184. [167].

7.3 Die Welt des Gebetes

*Die Welt des Gebetes*¹⁸ [*The World of Prayer*] is a collection of Adrienne's insights on prayer that von Balthasar selected and arranged like "flowers in a bouquet." In the book's *Foreword*, von Balthasar notes that like any bouquet it could have been larger or smaller or arranged differently.¹⁹ Published in 1951, *Die Welt des Gebetes* is fruit of the "the time of the great dictations," the years from 1944 to 1948 when Adrienne dictated to von Balthasar a great number of reflections, meditations and insights.²⁰ Von Balthasar describes the fundamental thesis of the book in the following way:

Like everything that comes to man out of God's self-revelation in Christ, such as grace, faith, hope and love and like the relationship between Christ and the Church, prayer has its ultimate roots in God himself and in his triune exchange of life. Beyond all purely creaturely motives and needs, Christian prayer is a participation in an inner, divine life and prayer, that is revealed, prepared and brought to fruition in the world by Jesus Christ our Lord and by him made available for us to participate in.²¹

Although the book does not intend to offer a complete doctrine of prayer, it does give a number of observations on prayer during the time of preparation for marriage and during marriage itself. Focusing on these pertinent passages in our treatment, this section is divided into three sections, corresponding to three themes: prayer during the time of engagement, prayer in marriage, and divine love and human love.

7.3.1 Prayer During the Time of Engagement

As we saw above in our study of *Christlicher Stand*, not only must the choice to follow the religious life be carried out in prayer, but also the choice for marriage must be made prayerfully. In *Die Welt des Gebetes*, Adrienne returns to this insight. She explains that if one chooses marriage as a state of life, one ought to make this choice in prayer and discernment and should not exclude consideration of the religious state. Unfortunately, most people who choose marriage do not base their decision on a prayer of indifference. True indifference is not characterized by apathy and detachment, but is marked by an openness to living in whichever state God so chooses for that person. Adrienne notes that too often young men and women choose marriage and only afterwards consider asking God to bless their decision.²² But if the choice to marry was made in prayer it would be blessed from the very beginning and the prayer during the time of choice will carry over into marriage.²³

¹⁸A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1951, Second edition 1992) Hereafter cited as *W. The World of Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985) transl. Graham Harrison.

¹⁹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 5. [9].

²⁰Cf. subsection 1.2.6.

²¹H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 5-6 [10].

²²Cf. *W.*, 136. [150]. Drawing from an analogy using medical terms, Adrienne underlines the subjectivity that can take place when it comes to choosing a state of life: "In sickness, he who wanted to be his own doctor would treat himself quite differently than would the physician, for almost always the subjective symptoms are misleading as to the nature and extent of the actual trouble. Certainly, the praying person who is on retreat attains distance from his life, but not from his prayer. Only the priest, who stands outside the retreatant's life and prays along with him, can do this."

²³Cf. *W.*, 134-135. [148].

How does one know that one has made a genuine decision in accord with God's will? Adrienne writes that when one begins to consider marriage, one should bring this before the Lord. If one's prayer is strengthened and made more decisive and if one feels closer to God, then it is possible that God will also grant certainty regarding one's consideration.²⁴ In any case, the time of engagement is an extremely important time in the engaged person's prayer life. Adrienne explains:

For prayer, there is no time of greater consequence than that in which a person is about to embark definitively upon his state of life. The danger of inner estrangement is seldom greater. If he wanted to use his being in love as an excuse for praying less, he would soon notice that he has gone off the track. He would not be able to find the rhythm of his inner life anymore. Faith and prayer are so intimately interwoven that to give up prayer is to lose a part of one's faith. And it could even be that such a neglect during engagement might never be made good again in marriage.²⁵

Indeed, if one considering marriage were to distance himself from God and then to still maintain this distance when he marries, it would be difficult for him to draw closer again to God in his married life.

During engagement, the betrothed must allow their situation and circumstances to be adapted to their prayer. If the engaged man and woman were to try to do the opposite, that is, to adapt their prayer to their situation and circumstances, they would find that the latter can change so quickly that they would no longer have time for the former. Adrienne relates that so many people lose their habit of prayer during the busyness and anxiousness of engagement only to try to regain their routine of prayer in the first weeks of marriage. Unfortunately, it might already be too late. They realize in sadness, even horror, that they have built up another routine in their life that does not take prayer into account. Thus, they no longer can see how to make room for prayer.²⁶

Fiancé and fiancée are to entrust themselves to God. In this giving over, each will then feel free to discuss his personal piety or spirituality with the other. However, in speaking of matters of the spirit, the engaged persons may experience a shyness that is akin to the bodily modesty of chaste young men and women. Adrienne writes that the mystery of God and the mystery of the body are united in such a way that the latter is contained in the former. If the man and woman already know that there is a bodily intimacy reserved for marriage, they realize now that there is also a spiritual intimacy that they will reveal to each other more profoundly later in their married life.²⁷

²⁴Cf. W, 172. [189-190].

²⁵W, 175. [193].

²⁶Cf. W, 176. [193].

²⁷Cf. W, 173. [190]. Thus, just as there is a revelation on the bodily level that will take place only in marriage, so too on the spiritual level. A certain discretion surrounds the prayer of the spouses-to-be. Adrienne does not explicitly say that the engaged persons do not pray together. However, one can draw the conclusion that their prayer together is limited to attending Mass together or perhaps participating in a Holy Hour together at a parish church or university chapel. If a more intense period of prayer is desired by the fiancé or fiancée, such as a retreat of several days or a week, it would be better if each did this alone rather than together. With marriage, although each spouse will maintain discretion with regard to the other's prayer and relationship to God, nonetheless each will desire to share something of his or her spiritual life. With its indissoluble,

The yearnings of the body are felt in different ways by the man and the woman and these will have a certain impact on the way each prays. The *man*, on the one hand, realizes that should he choose to marry, he will have to wait until the wedding night to give himself over bodily to his wife. Adrienne notes that the man has a greater awareness of the sexual drive and its demands than the woman. Consequently, his renunciation in this realm during engagement is more clearly defined than the woman's. The *woman*, on the other hand, longs to give herself over to both God and her spouse-to-be. Adrienne writes of the woman: "She feels a longing, a need to give herself over, that encompasses both God and her beloved, but she is not at pains to fix the boundaries of this giving over."²⁸

On the one hand, the *man* prepares himself spiritually for the wonderful gift by the woman of herself to him; on the other hand, the *woman* prepares to give herself over in marriage. On the one hand, the *man* senses a certain mysteriousness that is ultimately founded in God and that prompts him to bring it to prayer. By contemplating this developing mystery inside of him, the man neither ignores it, nor does he try to find out everything about it. He simply entrusts it continually to God. On the other hand, the *woman* prepares to give herself over. In choosing to marry, the woman prays to "commend also the man's faith to God, so that God may see that she expects to be fructified by his faith as well. For as the man introduces the woman to physical love, it is also part of his office to introduce her into his prayer."²⁹

As a point of reference for their prayer, the engaged couple can look to the saints and particularly to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Adrienne elaborates:

The thought of these saintly persons in their relationship to the Son will help the engaged persons to remain under God's gaze and to live within the demands of the Christian family. Their prayer does not need to keep its earlier abstract form, but it can change along with and correspond to what now arises. It can even become much more childlike than earlier. It may regain something of the quality it had when one was introduced in prayer by one's own mother to the Child Jesus and his Mother when one experienced them both as if through some visibility of the Spirit.³⁰

Adrienne suggests that it can be helpful for the engaged man and woman to recall their childhood experiences of prayer. More precisely, the engaged person can draw from the concreteness of the first experiences of prayer, when he or she was introduced in prayer to the Child Jesus or to the Virgin Mary. Contemplating the concrete image of the persons of the Holy Family, the engaged person can follow Jesus, Mary and Joseph's prayerful example.³¹

sacramental bond, marriage offers a foundation for this sharing that engagement cannot offer.

²⁸Cf. W, 173. [190].

²⁹W, 173-174. [190-191].

³⁰W, 174-175. [192].

³¹Cf. W, 175. [192].

7.3.2 Prayer in Marriage

When they marry, the spouses should find prayer to be indispensable for their marriage. Not only do the spouses pray when an important decision is to be made, but also they realize that each is responsible for supporting the other in prayer. If one or the other does not pray, one can deprive the other of a prayer life. Consequently, the spouses can become accustomed to living on simply a natural level. Later, when one tries to return to an attitude of prayer, one may find oneself too distant from the other to penetrate deeper into the life of prayer that they should be sharing from the beginning. Therefore, it is clear that from the very beginning of marriage, that each spouse has to make time for prayer.³²

Already by uniting together before God in marriage, husband and wife realize that they do not need to pray together *physically* a great deal. When they do pray together, it is a way to encourage each other in the life of prayer. Because each spouse's prayer is unique, each should respect the other's prayer relationship with God. Certainly, common prayer remains important in their life: it should be neither *excluded* nor *exclusive*. The spouses' common prayer will remind them of the sacrament that they have received together. Encompassing their married life with its daily joys and trials, their common prayer will strengthen their indissoluble bond. By allowing their children to take part in their common prayer, the spouses witness to the reality that their marriage "has its stability in the Lord, that the spouses' mutual bond in the Lord belongs so much to each of them that they can together give expression to it, and that the Lord's words, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name....,' has a particular meaning precisely for them."³³

When they first marry, it may take some time before the spouses feel totally comfortable praying in their new state of life. In other words, they will undoubtedly have to overcome a certain amount of inhibition. But they should not allow this to impede them. With the joys of the wedding and the reception of the sacrament still fresh in their minds, the spouses could pray together to interiorize better the whole event. Now that they are married, the couple will try to form their prayer to their state of life. Once again the couple can look to the example of the Holy Family.³⁴

Nonetheless, the thoughts and concerns that the spouses bring to prayer ought to go beyond the small circle of their own family. Knowing that they are a family within the Church, the spouses will be open to the concerns of other families as well. Indeed, they share the fruits of their prayer by remembering the needs of others. Neither do they exclude from their prayer those in the consecrated state of life. As they settle down in marriage, children will help the couple to avoid complacency and lukewarmness in their prayer life.

³²Cf. W, 176. [194]. Perceptively, Adrienne observes that one spouse can get so "far ahead" of the other in the realm of prayer and the spiritual life, that the other spouse can no longer catch up. Often, the woman is more inclined than the man to want to grow spiritually. In these cases, she can lead the man by example, rather than by rebuke.

³³W, 176-177. [194-195]. Cf. GS, 48: "He [Christ] abides with them in order that by their mutual self-giving spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity, as he loved the Church and delivered himself for it. [...] Inspired by the example and family prayer of their parents, children, and in fact everyone living under the family roof, will more easily set out upon the path of a truly human training, of salvation, and of holiness." Cf. Eph 5, 25.

³⁴Cf. W, 177-178. [195-196].

When they first marry, the newlyweds' prayer is characterized by a hope that God bless their union with the gift of children. When the wife becomes pregnant, husband and wife pray for their child. Here Adrienne cautions against prayer becoming a type of superstition: "To be sure, the mother must pray for her child, but in a generous way, not anxiously. [...] Prayers of petition must not degenerate into a list of instructions for God."³⁵

As the family grows, Christian parents teach their children how to pray. Adrienne gives a couple of vivid examples how they can do this:

A mother kneels by her child's bedside and prays with him. The child is so little that he hardly understands anything. He only knows that mother takes him in her arms everyday, folds his little hands together and then says something in a particular tone of voice. This has been repeated so often that it is now part of daily life. [...] The child has been initiated into prayer without knowing what prayer is. He only senses that something different happens here and that this something different, because it is done in his mother's love, is part of her love. It is a way in which the child experiences the love of the mother who is present and who occupies herself with him.³⁶

Later, the mother must leave the child's room or the house for a period of time. The child realizes that even though he cannot see his mother, she still cares for him and is concerned about him. Adrienne continues:

The mother can use this image that non-visibility can be something good in order to begin to explain to the child something about God. Here two things come together: the words of prayer and their explanation. And it is not clear which of the two first makes an impression on the child. [...] The world of prayer is a world of invisibility, that, however, acquires a reality in the arms of the visible mother and in her words. Once he has opened his eyes to it, the child knows that this world has always existed since his mother has always prayed; he grows into it as something quite natural.³⁷

Soon the child will learn that there are particular times to pray that the mother determines and initiates. Also he learns certain gestures, such as the sign of the cross and the folding of his hands.³⁸

As the child grows older, parents can teach him about the Church. The child may ask: "Do I need to say these difficult words that I sometimes do not understand?" His parent can reply: "No, I can pray them for you while you pray together with me. You can also pray for other children: for those who are not taught to pray and for those who forgot to pray. When you pray for them, God will hear them better. Others pray for you too." In this way, he learns how prayer is carried out within the Church. Participating in Mass with his parents, the child understands that this is prayer also.³⁹

³⁵W, 178-180. [196-198].

³⁶W, 114. [126].

³⁷W, 114-115. [126-127].

³⁸Cf. W, 115. [127].

³⁹Cf. W, 116-117. [128-129].

From the child's school catechism classes, questions will arise that he will bring home with him. Things that the parents had perhaps forgotten, they now need to learn again so that they can respond to their child's queries. In this way the child can affect a deepening in the prayer life and faith not only of his parents, but also of his whole family.⁴⁰ At school the child will also learn certain prayers and other realities of the faith that will also reinforce what he learned from his parents. As the child grows older, it is important that he learns to pray on his own. All too often, many young people never go beyond the child's stage of reciting vocal prayers. Adrienne observes that consequently "their prayer life does not have the power to penetrate the rest of their existence with the truth of faith."⁴¹

If one is never able to learn to pray on one's own, it makes it increasingly difficult to properly discern a vocation to the religious life or to properly choose to marry. Adrienne describes the drama in this way:

Many people never arrive at this decision [to pray] because they have never recognized the beauty of prayer. Therefore, young people, when the possibility of independent, personal prayer opens up, should seize this moment of their lives and consider very seriously the significance of what is revealed to them here. They are the ones who have been spoken to by God and they have personal access to him. They can speak to him face to face, see their lives and the whole of creation with his eyes and immerse themselves continually in this light. A door has been opened to them and for the rest of their lives they have the freedom to enter. Many decide not to and so the life of prayer remains closed to them in its fullness and depth.⁴²

As the child reaches this stage in his prayer life, parents must not get in the way. They allow their children to draw their own conclusions. If parents plan too much for their children it can even be an abuse of trust. In effect, they assume responsibility for the child's problems and give God less of an opportunity to help the child deal with life's difficulties.⁴³

As their children grow up and leave the home to live elsewhere, the parents resume their life as an "empty nest" couple. At this time in their lives, the spouses realize that many of the graces they have received during their life together were not so much for their own benefit, but were to be shared with others. As during engagement, early married life and family life, the spouses still adapt their situation to their prayer. Since they now have more time to pray, the spouses pray more. The older couple also makes its possessions more available to their children, grandchildren, the poor and the needy. When one of the spouses is widowed, he realizes that he lives in a new state of life that is marked by its own particular graces. Now the widow's or widower's task lies mainly in the life of prayer. Often this prayer is carried out in church among the faithful and in the presence of the Lord.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Cf. W, 180-181. [199].

⁴¹W, 120-124. [132-137].

⁴²W, 124. [136-137].

⁴³Cf. W., 182. [200].

⁴⁴Cf. W., 182-186. [201-203].

7.3.3 Divine Love and Human Love

When human love is truly giving and selfless, it enables one to come nearer the love of God. Living with the beloved, therefore, becomes a way of living with God. Adrienne explains that spouses live in a “prayer of being” [*Gebet des Seins*], a verbal or non-verbal communion that opens a way of communicating with God through one’s beloved. Even without being aware of it, the person who loves God continually can open a way of prayer for everyone who loves God and shares his life. Adrienne offers the example of the musician to help understand this reality:

Just as a good musician opens the whole realm of music with the very first note, so the person who loves God opens heaven. [...] The genuine musician simply dives into the music like a swimmer into water; he does not put on airs or make excuses but simply serves his music without reflecting on his ability or lack of it. He does not live in himself, but in the notes; he is not concerned with the effect that *he* will produce, but with that of the music. And the listener is captivated, not by his playing, but by the greatness of the music. In the same way, the one who loves lives in God; he reveals God and brings those who know him into a living fellowship with God.⁴⁵

In the marriage relationship, therefore, each partner opens a way to God and reveals God to the other such that the focus is on God, not on oneself.

Adrienne observes that God gives human nature a rich analogy of heavenly love in the man-woman relationship, whereby each spouse embodies different aspects of divine love. For her part, the woman is always ready to respond to the man and to be receptive to him. Thus, in her, the *receptivity* of love is emphasized. For his part, the man loves without calculating. His is a love that gives itself to the point that its prodigality serves as an image to comprehend the Lord’s Body in the Eucharist. Thus, in the man, the *prodigality* of love is underlined.⁴⁶

Adrienne goes one step further to draw a parallel between sexual love and prayer. Just as the conjugal act raises the spouses to an overwhelming level of love, so too individual prayer can burst forth into contemplation:

And just as the lovers’ constant readiness for the act of love may be fulfilled now or at another time or much later without their love being diminished, so in prayer our disponibility for God is fulfilled by the approaches that God makes in his own time and and that cannot be brought about or hastened by any means. But between physical love and prayer there is not only a comparison but a particular connection whereby the woman is brought by the man and the man by the woman, to God, and each sees in the other a parable and a representation of God’s incarnate love. And if their love is pure, they catch a glimpse of the fuller embodiment of God’s love beyond and within this physical form of their love, and they are led to adoration, thanksgiving, surrender and

⁴⁵W, 16-17. [22-23].

⁴⁶Cf. W, 17. [23].

submission.⁴⁷

Therefore, just as one cannot automatically call forth fruitful contemplation, but must sometimes endure a period of dryness, so too conjugal love has its own fluctuations. However, if these fluctuations are lived in God they will bear fruit.

Drawing comparisons between Trinitarian love and marital love, Adrienne points out that there is an “overflowing of expectation” in divine love and in human love. Adrienne writes that the Son is the “overfulfillment of the Father’s expectation.” United together, fulfillment and expectation leave space for an “infinite greater-than of the fulfillment.” In a similar way, the lover knows that the beloved is coming, but the actual arrival exceeds expectations. It is a relation of superabundance.⁴⁸

Moreover, between the persons of the Trinity, there is never a holding back or a concealing, only “a constant acceptance and surrender, self-opening and self-disclosure, showing and loving.” The Holy Spirit too is a part of this exchange as Adrienne explains:

As soon as the Father and the Son are together, they cause the Spirit to proceed as the witness of their living bond and as a witness of the life that consists of their being in unity. And immediately, the Spirit takes on this role of witness to their life, at the original moment of his procession. From the very beginning the dialogue between Father and Son sees the signs of fruitfulness in the Spirit, and from the beginning the Spirit, bearing witness, receives a share in their fruitfulness. To the Father, he bears witness to the Son’s equality of nature; to the Son, he testifies to the Father’s equality. And the Spirit so fulfills and overfills the expectations of the Father and the Son that they see more in him than they expected. In the Holy Spirit they experience a totally unsuspected proof of their love so that they are bound to him in gratitude, just as he is to them. [...] It is adoration because God is in the presence of God; it is fulfillment because God may expect everything from God.⁴⁹

In the love between man and woman, there is an element of trust, a yearning and a respectful expectation for the other to reveal oneself. To eliminate this would kill their love.⁵⁰

At various occasions in the spousal relationship, however, it is normal that one partner will be stronger in the exchange of love. Still, husband and wife will grow and support each other as they recognize that these moments are inevitably a part of their life-long relationship. Contrarily, in God there are no lapses in the encounter of love. The Trinitarian Persons maintain a tension, not only on account of *heterogeneity* but also through *homogeneity*, in which the one Person discovers and fulfills himself in his equal. Unlike the spousal relationship, no tedium in the Trinitarian relationship exists, because the tension between the Persons is nurtured with fresh revelations of each person’s perfection,

⁴⁷W, 17. [24].

⁴⁸Cf. W, 22-23. [30].

⁴⁹W, 24-25. [32].

⁵⁰Cf. W, 27. [34].

giving, receiving and fruitfulness.⁵¹

Considering spousal love, Adrienne notes that it risks the danger of dying out if its embers are not stoked from time to time by new discoveries and growth in mind and spirit:

If two people who love each other were forced to pass the time together without interruption in the same room night and day, alone and with nothing else to busy themselves with, the time would come when their love could no longer stand this togetherness. It would decline and die. In order that their love remain alive, each person must have his own sphere of freedom and be able to pursue his own interests, in order to return to the beloved with new discoveries, results and achievements.⁵²

To avoid tedium in marital love, God gives the spouses the gift of sexual intercourse with its possibility of bodily fruitfulness. Children cannot but help enrich parents' lives. Moreover, God shares his divine love and spiritual fruitfulness with spouses. Adrienne explains: "He offers himself in his inexhaustible abundance, so that now also human life and love receive a new, deeper and inexhaustible meaning."⁵³

As one's love for the other grows, the difference between the spouses is always respected. The man does not desire to be exactly like the woman and vice versa. As they become more united in love, it is the "thou" that is accentuated, not the "I." The more different the other is, the more worthy he appears to be loved. Certainly, it can happen that the spouses' union grows to a point of interpenetration where neither spouse knows exactly where one begins and the other ends. However, far from being stymied, the "thou" is raised up. Adrienne notes that one sees this also in the Trinity, for it pleases the Father that the Son make his own decisions: "It is the Son's glory that the Father wants to see when the Son glorifies him. And the Spirit wants to see the glory of both, not paying attention to the fact that he himself completes their glorification."⁵⁴

Adrienne sees two other comparisons and contrasts between divine love and human sexual love. Firstly, she notes that in the sexual love between man and woman, the elements of *act* and *state* alternate. State is emphasized more in the woman, while in the man, act is underlined. In divine love, act and state are one as the Father begets and loves the Son and brings forth the Holy Spirit continuously at every moment.⁵⁵ Secondly, in regards to the sexual act, Adrienne sees an analogy between the spouses and the Trinity in the fact that the lovers know exactly what they are doing and yet, at the same time, in another sense, they know nothing. The man has an overall understanding of union with the woman, but he does not know how she will receive him on a particular occasion. He only hopes that his approach to her will awaken an even greater love for him. Analogously, the processes in God are based on the Father's initial ordering. Included in the Father's begetting of the Son is the cooperation of the Son and the Spirit's procession. However, this vision is so powerful that it constitutes already the bringing forth of what it initially envisions.⁵⁶

⁵¹Cf. W., 27. [34-35].

⁵²W., 39. [47].

⁵³W., 40. [47].

⁵⁴W., 65-66. [73-74].

⁵⁵Cf. W., 32-33. [40].

⁵⁶W., 34. [41-42].

7.4 *Magd des Herrn*

Dictated to von Balthasar in late 1946 and early 1947, *Magd des Herrn*⁵⁷ [*Handmaid of the Lord*] represents Adrienne von Speyr's fundamental work on Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In *Magd des Herrn*, Adrienne reflects on each phase of Mary's life and describes her indispensable role in salvation history. Proceeding with Mary from the Annunciation to the Cross, the reader is drawn by Adrienne into Mary's fundamental attitude of obedience and availability. In *Erster Blick*, von Balthasar describes Marian consent in these terms: "The 'Yes-word' [*Jawort*] of Mary is the archetype of Christian fruitfulness. Only with man's Yes, can God initiate something that is Christian and supernaturally meaningful. Only in this Yes can the Son of God become man: then in Mary, now, in a new way, in each one who attempts to join in her Yes-word."⁵⁸ For the purposes of our study, we will study how Mary gives this Yes or consent, in three ways: in her marriage with Joseph, in her spiritual union with John, and in her own person. Each Marian model of consent serves as a prototype for marital consent. We will treat each one in order in the three sections that follow.

7.4.1 The Marriage of Mary and Joseph

Contemplating Mary and Joseph's marriage in *Magd des Herrn*, Adrienne highlights their spousal fidelity and their fundamental obedience, openness and service to God. Above all, Mary and Joseph are two people especially chosen by God to serve him in marriage. Already when they are betrothed to each other, Mary and Joseph are aware of their desire to serve God. They want to belong to each other in marriage, but at the same time they also desire to consecrate their lives to serving God such that they do not exclude any possibility of how God might call them to serve him. Both Mary and Joseph lived in a culture where it would have been their duty to marry. Thus, when Mary consents to marrying Joseph, she not only desires to give herself to him in marriage, but also she wants to fulfill the law. For Mary, giving herself over *to God's will* and *to the man God has given to her* form a unity in her spirit.⁵⁹

Adrienne observes that Mary does not ponder how her married life with Joseph will unfold. Mary remains so open to God's will that she does not even consider the idea of having children with Joseph. In other words, Mary decides to marry, but she does not decide against virginity. Indeed, Mary sees no contradiction between marriage and virginity. In paradise, Adrienne speculates, the states of marriage and virginity would not have been mutually exclusive. Thus, bodily fruitfulness would have been compatible with consecrated virginity. Therefore, like Eve before the Fall, Mary was born without original sin and lives in the same paradisaal, primordial reality where bodily fruitfulness and virginity are mutually compatible and where the states of marriage and virginity are one.⁶⁰

⁵⁷A. von Speyr, *Magd des Herrn* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1948) Hereafter cited as *MH. Handmaid of the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985) transl. E. A. Nelson.

⁵⁸H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 47. [53].

⁵⁹Cf. *MH*, 59. [54].

⁶⁰Cf. *MH*, 60. [55]. Von Balthasar, the editor, interjects this footnote at this point in *Magd des Herrn*: "Many Fathers of the Church and medieval theologians share this opinion."

Subject to original sin, unlike Mary, Joseph perceives a contradiction between the married state and virginity. Adrienne notes that should he make a renunciation of his sexual, generative powers, he will make this renunciation with the whole strength of his manhood such that his masculinity would be strengthened. Joseph renounces with strength and intensity; the matter is concealed in silence, never to be brought up again by him or Mary. Nevertheless, Joseph experiences Mary's love. Her love penetrates Joseph and lifts him as only feminine love is able to fulfill a man. In the warmth of Mary's love for him, Joseph looks forward to their life together and their life as a family. He sees how he is to guide this new family as husband and father. He has chosen marriage freely and is fully aware of its responsibilities. Although Joseph is married, God gives him a unique form of religious life within the married state whereby he is called to abstinence.⁶¹

While it is true that Joseph ponders divorcing Mary, Adrienne sustains that Joseph's decision is made without really considering the person of Mary. Merely wanting to be faithful to the law, Joseph does not even allow his thoughts to reach their conclusion to the "seemingly unavoidable implication." Far from being angry with Mary, Joseph wants to respect the law by doing what he believes is right under the circumstances. On her part, Mary remains discreet and modest and does not talk to Joseph about her pregnancy. Mary and Joseph are united in a reverent silence before the mystery of God working in this special way in their lives.⁶²

In this regard, Adrienne compares Mary and Joseph's reverent silence before God to the discretion that married couples show to each other in the realm of sacramental confession:

Christian spouses protect the mystery that each has before God in the same way. They go hand in hand to church, but what each has confessed they do not discuss with each other afterwards. And this silence does not limit and disturb their intimacy. Through their living together so closely, each perhaps could conceive what the other has to confess, but they will never, not even just for themselves, try to imagine what it is: out of reverence for each other and reverence for God. Genuine confession, that is, one understood as our self-expression before God, requires the silence that Mary received and kept through the conversation with the angel.⁶³

Therefore, Mary's silence before God serves as a model for the discretion that each spouse manifests in the practice of sacramental confession and in their relationship with each other. Indubitably, each spouse could surmise the content of the other's confession. Nonetheless, it is to be revealed only to the confessor priest who represents Christ. Rather than threatening their intimacy, the silence between the spouses in the realm of confession actually enhances their marital union.⁶⁴

⁶¹Cf. *MH*, 61-62. [56-57].

⁶²Cf. *MH*, 63-64. [58-59].

⁶³*MH*, 64. [59].

⁶⁴Certainly, this point must be understood in the proper context. As was shown in subsection 7.2.2, there are times in marriage when one spouse offends the other. The offending spouse must acknowledge the sin and ask forgiveness not only of God in sacramental confession, but also of the offended spouse.

Even after being informed by the angel as to how Jesus is to be born (Mt 1,20-21), Joseph does not break the silence between himself and Mary:

The silence is broken on the side of God, not on the side of man. The angel allows this mutual silence to flow into a new silence in which the knowledge and understanding that were only one-sided until now will from now on exist on both sides. It will be a silence of understanding where the mystery of the pregnancy will never have to be spoken of between them. In this way, two chaste spouses will scarcely speak about their most intimate union, not even about what they had thought about it before and what they have discovered in it. Everything remains enclosed in the act of reverence toward each other that demands silence. Mary's mystery must be preserved, for her commitment to God is a deeper one than any commitment to a husband. This silence of the Mother before her earthly bridegroom will never be lost to the Church. It is a grace that lives on in Christian marriages. The mystery that each partner has before God cannot only not disturb their mutual love but can only fructify, deepen and ennoble it. Far from endangering the completeness of their giving over to each other, it [the mystery of silence] is, in the long run, the best guarantee of the ever-new vitality of human love.⁶⁵

In this way, Joseph and Mary's silence is the prototype for the silence that Christian couples have in the face of certain divine and mysterious realities of their marriage.

Considering Mary and Joseph's unique union, Adrienne explains that God can intervene in any marriage. Sometimes he can ask one partner to bind himself to God in a special form of obedience. When this happens, the other partner is called on to make a renunciation of certain marriage rights. Of course, this partner remains free to reject or accept this special call. His obedience is a secondary one that is included in the primary obedience of the one called. The partner called to primary obedience is obliged to heed this special call, since obedience to the marriage partner is subordinate to the Lord's greater call. Adrienne adds that out of ecclesiastical and human concerns, the Church can add an ecclesiastical law requiring the consent of the other partner for this higher commitment to God.⁶⁶

Adrienne distinguishes between a "Joseph-marriage" [*Josephsehe*] and a "John-marriage" [*Johannesehe*]. In a *Joseph-marriage*, God calls one or both of the partners to follow him in the evangelical counsels. The *Joseph-marriage* is always initiated by God. In a *John-marriage*, a male religious and a female religious would live together under the evangelical counsels. However, Adrienne emphasizes: "But there is no such thing as a potential marriage within the religious state."⁶⁷ She explains that physical nearness and

⁶⁵MH, 65. [59-60].

⁶⁶Cf. MH, 67. [61].

⁶⁷MH, 68. [62]. To illustrate her point that a marriage cannot truly exist between two religious, Adrienne gives the example of Saints Francis and Clare. They had a common mission, but they lived in separate cloisters. Adrienne states clearly: "No one who has a mission in the Church may of himself seek fulfillment from the opposite sex in order to obtain, for example, a greater spiritual fruitfulness for his mission. It is only by way of a specific task that is given in the light of the Cross, and not as a generally accessible 'way of

companionship are not necessary for fruitfulness in the Church. Those who choose to enter into a John-marriage on their own initiative are mistaken. Adrienne concludes: "To want to embark on this path on one's own initiative would mean to choose temptation as the means to strengthen one's mission and thus to distract one's attention away from the immediate service of God and onto human matters."⁶⁸

Although Mary and Joseph live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, nonetheless theirs was a true marriage.⁶⁹ Having already explained how they lived within the vows of obedience and virginity, Adrienne now considers their vow of poverty. In a special way, Joseph brings poverty to the Holy Family. Because of the nature of his carpentry trade, he will always be looking for work, moving from place to place. Poverty, then, is Joseph's gift to the Holy Family. If the vow of obedience is especially outlined and embodied in Mary, then Mary and Joseph live the vow of virginity, together, but at the same time, each in his own way. Mary lives it in her total openness to God; Joseph lives it by subordinating his initial understanding and desires to God's directives.⁷⁰

7.4.2 The Spiritual Union of Mary and John

God called the Virgin Mary to bear his Son and to be Joseph's spouse, but at the Cross, Jesus gives Mary over to John. Adrienne underlines that all fruitfulness in the Church always comes about from within a community: not only in the state of marriage but also in the consecrated state. Led into each state of life by God, Mary could be said to have co-founded each together with her Son. Indeed, Mary lived each state of life: with Joseph, the state of marriage was underscored; with John, the state of virginity was emphasized. In other words, on the one hand, Mary and Joseph's union was marked by the daily challenges inherent in providing physical and spiritual sustenance for Jesus and themselves. On the other hand, Mary and John's union was marked rather by a supernatural and spiritual inclination. Certainly, the physical-material demands of daily life continued to exist in Mary and John's union, but it was secondary to the spiritual element.⁷¹

What is the exact nature of this spiritual element? First of all, Jesus, dying on the Cross, gives Mary over to John, the priest. Mary, in turn, submits herself to the priestly and apostolic mission of John. In the Holy Family, Mary was the focal point since she carried Jesus in her womb. Now in this new, spiritual union, John is the focal point. The Word of the Lord lives on through John's priesthood and forms the supernatural framework into which the Mother is now incorporated. Mary offers to John her living, fruitful and abundant grace. Therefore, as once Mary bore Jesus in her womb, John now bears Christ in his priestly office. Adrienne continues: "Once the Lord had chosen his Mother, but he had to adapt himself to the earthly framework of the family and to Joseph's authority. Now Mary must adapt herself to the new framework of the Church that is embodied in John. John does

perfection,' that a following of Mary and John can be conceivable in the Church."

⁶⁸MH, 67-68. [61-62].

⁶⁹Cf. MH, 67. [61]: "Maria lebt mit Joseph in einer wahren Ehe. Aber der Geist der Gelübde ist in dieser Ehe verwirklicht, sowohl auf seiten Marias wie auf seiten Josephs."

⁷⁰Cf. MH, 70-71. [64-65].

⁷¹Cf. MH, 135-136. [123-124].

not go into Mary's house but takes the Mother with him into his own home."⁷²

7.4.3 Mary as Model for the Christian States of Life

In giving of herself over to the Lord and in her fruitfulness, the Virgin Mary is the supreme model for both the married person and the consecrated person. Indeed, Adrienne notes that all forms of Christian fruitfulness are modeled after Mary: whether physical or spiritual, virginal or marital. In fact, Mary is the most physically fruitful of all mothers even though she had only one child. Because she gave of herself totally and perfectly to God and because she was ready to receive all of mankind as children in the one Child, all mankind was given to her as her children. By Mary's example, Christian women, in particular, should learn to see marriage as the state in which they are to give themselves completely and unselfishly and are gifted with spiritual as well as physical fruitfulness.⁷³

At the heart of Mary's virgin motherhood lies her assent. Adrienne calls this assent a vow of obedience, poverty and chastity. It is a single renunciation that contains three inseparable renunciations. Mary gives her virgin body and spirit over to God in obedience and poverty. She no longer disposes of it herself; the Lord does. She is poor, because she does not belong to herself. She is obedient because she longs to do God's will for the salvation of the world. She is virgin, because she gives herself over to the disposition of the Lord. Indeed, it would not have been possible for Mary to obey God internally while at the same time doing something else externally. Adrienne notes that this would be like doing difficult interior penance while living a life of exterior comfort.⁷⁴

Adrienne observes that Mary gives her assent without knowing exactly how it will be received by God. The Holy Spirit moves Mary to give her *fiat*, but God can hear and use it however he desires. In terms of human relationships, Mary's assent is a preliminary betrothal to the Holy Spirit whereby her assent is "given over into" the other. To illustrate this, once again Adrienne brings up the example of the marriage covenant. In Christian marriage, each partner speaks his assent in the spirit of the other. Adrienne explains: "He does not see his own spirit as the final guarantee of fidelity (that would be presumption and egotism) but instead, in love, he sees the spirit of the one whom he loves to be such a guarantee. To say Yes in his own spirit would mean to affirm his own deficiencies and sins as well, but to say Yes in the spirit of the other means to say Yes to love."⁷⁵

In Mary's vow of poverty, she places her wealth at God's disposal. Likewise, in her vow of virginity, she gives her fruitfulness over to God. Determining how Mary's virginity is to be fruitful, God grants her fruitfulness of both body and soul that she has already given over in her assent. When Mary says to the angel Gabriel "I do not know man," she merely states the fact of her virginity. But this statement is actually her vow of chastity and virginity. Proceeding no further, she does not try to convince the angel that she will not conceive. She simply shows that she knows the essential aspects of marriage and leaves the

⁷²*MH*, 137-138. [124-125].

⁷³*Cf. MH*, 184.187. [170.173].

⁷⁴*Cf. MH*, 11. [11].

⁷⁵*MH*, 14-15. [14].

rest to God.⁷⁶

As the pregnant Mother of Jesus, Mary experiences in a unique way the blending of spiritual and physical fruitfulness as it unfolds inside of her. As the Child Jesus grows in her womb, her love for him also grows. Not only does Mary's human, motherly love increase, but also the Lord's love in her makes her increasingly able to love. At the same time, Mary's share in the merit and in the life of the Son increases. Adrienne explains that this love and merit do not simply accumulate in Mary, but it is as if she allows them to grow exponentially in order to give their abundant fruitfulness over to the Church. It is similar to the way that every mother "builds up" maternal love for her child during pregnancy. Each mother keeps this "surplus of love" ready to give to her child for the future good and bad days. Mary also knows this secret.⁷⁷

At the same time that her love for her Son grows, Mary is drawn out of the intimacy with the Child and into the deep mysteries of the Father-Son relationship. Here Adrienne compares this to the transition of the bride and new wife who must allow herself to be introduced into her husband's personal interests. Thus, she does not try to know him only within the exclusiveness of their relationship, but she must try to know him within the realm of his own world that includes his whole life.⁷⁸

However, as both Mother and Virgin, Mary gives meaning to both motherhood and virginity. Ultimately, her virginity has meaning because it is fruitful. The Son gives virginity to Mary and to him she returns it so that the Holy Spirit can overshadow her and give her the Son. Then the Son gives Mary her virginity anew, so that she may be always virgin. Mary gives this virginal spirit to other women also, as Adrienne explains:

There are women who are already mothers and who perhaps have many children, but who are virgin in spirit. They have chosen marriage and fulfilled their matrimonial duties rightly and well. However in old age, when they can have no more children, they find again the maidenly character of their virginal years. Perhaps their husbands no longer need them, perhaps the couples have come to an agreement or maybe God has gifted them with the spirit of renunciation. A definite Marian grace is alive here.⁷⁹

Therefore, Mary does not look at her virginity as something for herself, but she sees it as a gift to share with others for increased fruitfulness, when God deems to grant them the gift of virginity.

When Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, the Magnificat becomes an articulation of the reality that is unfolding inside of Mary. Now that Jesus grows inside of Mary, more than ever her prayer is inseparable from the Son's. Just as they are physically united during pregnancy, Mary and Jesus are also spiritually united. Even though Jesus cannot yet speak in a human way, he determines the form of Mary's prayer, and therefore the words of the Magnificat. Mary is perfect *contemplation* because she has taken up the Son so much that

⁷⁶MH, 26-27. [24-25].

⁷⁷Cf. MH, 75. [69-70].

⁷⁸Cf. MH, 77. [72].

⁷⁹MH, 80. [74].

he lives inside of her. But Mary is also *action*, for she goes to Elizabeth to share the good news of God's might and goodness. Adrienne concludes: "Inasmuch as she carries the Lord to others physically and spiritually, she is doing what the Church will do later on when she brings men the Eucharist. The Lord, whom the Mother bears, and the Lord, who is present in the Host, is one and the same and has only one thought: to give himself away, to share his substance, in an infinite way."⁸⁰

With the birth of her child and the subsequent breast feeding, any mother is given the capacity to share her own substance with him. Indeed, the child needs his mother's sustenance to live. However, the mother also needs to give to her child in this way, because it enables her to quench her strong desire to give herself over to her child. In a similar way, this mutual giving over takes place between Mary and Jesus. The Son is nourished by Mary's life that she received for his sake and through him from God. Not only does a mother feed her child physically, but also she gives him spiritual sustenance. She teaches the child what love really is. Jesus, too, also learns of love from his Mother. Adrienne explains that the Son, who has perfect knowledge, puts this aside for the moment in order to have man's experience of love outside of Paradise.⁸¹ Thus, as the Child Jesus grows up in the loving embrace of the Holy Family, he is nourished both physically and spiritually. By Mary's example, Jesus comes to know what constitutes love of neighbor. Later, when the Lord will make the command to "love one's neighbor," he will already have lived this commandment in his relationship to Mary and Joseph. The Child Jesus, thus, learns from Mary the concrete things of daily life. She teaches him to walk, to eat, to speak. Adrienne marvels how Mary teaches Jesus speech with her own vocabulary; to the Word, she teaches the human word. He utters what he has learned and it becomes divine Word. Mary also teaches Jesus the law and the prophets. Adrienne summarizes: "Mary, who knows no original sin, and Joseph, who is redeemed from it, form the surroundings of the growing Son. From both of them, he experiences what it means to respond to his grace."⁸²

The dwelling place of the Holy Family remains free from sin. Outside the house, however, the Child Jesus comes into contact with sin. He sees its consequences. Perhaps, Joseph is not always treated justly for the hard work he performs. Mary, too, experiences the harshness of daily life. When Jesus sees these injustices, he knows first hand that correct behavior does not always guarantee fair treatment by others. Out of experience, therefore, he comes to know that an innocent person can help to bear guilt, but "that such bearing receives its value and meaning only from his redemptive mission to bear all sins."⁸³

Adrienne explains that at the wedding feast in Cana, at the very beginning of Jesus'

⁸⁰*MH*, 58. [52-53].

⁸¹*Cf. MH*, 96-97. [87-88]. Regarding this last point Adrienne includes the following footnote: "As God, Christ has the same knowledge as the Father and the Holy Spirit. As man, he possesses from the first moment of his existence the beatific vision of God. In addition, a special knowledge is infused into him by the Holy Spirit, so that he lacks no perfection of knowledge within the realm of his mission as Redeemer. But because it is particular to each human to gain knowledge through his senses as well, Christ, who became like us in everything, wanted to gain this human experiential knowledge progressively. It is of this knowledge that we here speak."

⁸²*MH*, 97-98. [87-88].

⁸³*MH*, 98. [89].

public ministry, Mary embodies all three roles: woman, Mother and Bride. First of all, Mary is *woman*. She looks over how things are unfolding at the feast and without paying special attention, she instinctually sees what is lacking or what needs to be done. She does this out of her natural femininity. As *Mother*, Mary watches over the Church, in order to see where something is missing or where there is a need for something. It will always be Mary's role to point out to the Son: "They have no more wine."⁸⁴ At Cana, Mary also appears as *Bride*:

But when she, in her faith, becomes insistent and her insistency seems almost like a desire to force the issue, her behavior is no longer characterized as personal but ecclesial. She plays the role of the Bride, that is, of the petitioning Church. At this moment, she stands at a most tender, most exposed point: she assesses both man's need and the disinclination of the Lord. And she cannot allow herself to be rebuffed at this moment; she would otherwise not have fulfilled her role as intercessor.⁸⁵

As the Church, Mary, the Bride, longs to be united with the Lord, the Bridegroom. Certainly, the Bride remains subordinate to the Bridegroom, but she has certain rights in regard to him. Mary represents these rights at Cana and understands these particular things as woman, Mother and Bride. In the same way that the man has to adapt to his spouse if he really wants to live united with her, so too the Lord allows himself to be shown certain feminine perspectives by his Mother.⁸⁶

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined three works by Adrienne von Speyr: *Die Beichte*, *Die Welt des Gebetes* and *Magd des Herrn*. A number of elements that constitute the sacramental and spiritual life of Christian spouses were considered. In *Die Beichte*, Adrienne shows how each spouse is to live in a transparent "confessional" attitude before each other and God. Sometimes, the spouses' sins are intertwined in such a way that it makes it difficult to individualize a particular sin in the confessional. By recognizing their shared culpability in their sacramental confession, the spouses are mutually strengthened in their spiritual life. In addition, in sharing the burden of their common sin, they experience in a small way Jesus' bearing of our sins on the Cross. Moreover, outlining three situations of transgression between spouses, Adrienne demonstrates that true growth in the marriage relationship occurs when the offending partner shows contrition, asks forgiveness and amends his life.

In *Die Welt des Gebetes*, Adrienne examines the world of prayer both before and during marriage. Before marriage, young men and women should pray for clear discernment regarding the state of life they are to live. Also during this time, it is imperative that engaged persons establish a good habit of prayer that carries over to married life. During marriage, the spouses' individual prayer retains a place of prominence that should be mutually respected, while common prayer serves to encourage each other in married life and to help to teach the children how to pray. In a profound reflection on the "prayer of being,"

⁸⁴Cf. *MH*, 114. [104].

⁸⁵*MH*, 115. [105].

⁸⁶Cf. *MH*, 115. [105].

Adrienne explains how truly prayerful spouses reveal God to each other.

In *Magd des Herrn*, we examined three models for Christian marriage: Mary and Joseph, Mary and John and Mary herself. Adrienne sustains that the marriage of *Mary and Joseph* was lived within the evangelical counsels. However, this did not make their marriage less of a marriage. Instead, their marriage was consecrated by the very presence of Jesus among them. While most spouses are not called to live in poverty, virginity and obedience, nevertheless they are to give their marriage over to God so that he may determine its ultimate form. Contemplating the special union between *Mary and John*, Adrienne observes that after Jesus' death and Resurrection, John takes Mary into his home so that she who once bore the Word in her womb, can now bring him to the world. In a similar way, Christian spouses can bring the Word into the world, when their marriage is a concrete and authentic witness of Christ's love for his Church. Finally, by giving herself over completely to the Lord, *Mary herself* is a model for both spouses and consecrated people. Mary, in her unconditional assent to God, allowed the Son to become Man and live among us. When spouses give their assent to live faithful and holy marriages, they join their Yes-word to Mary's, and the Son lives among them in a new way.

Chapter Eight: Theology of the Sexes

8.1 Introduction

Among the twelve *Nachlasswerke* [posthumous works] are the three volumes of *Erde und Himmel* [Heaven and Earth] and the one volume work, *Theologie der Geschlechter* [Theology of the Sexes] that offer a number of profound insights in the realm of the “theology of the sexes.” In her unique approach, Adrienne penetrates the depths of what it means for man and woman to be created in the image of a Trinitarian God. This reality has implications for all areas of the spouses’ existence: spiritual, emotional and sexual. In this chapter, we explore the contributions to marriage and family studies of *Erde und Himmel* in the first section and those of *Theologie der Geschlechter* in the second section.

8.2 *Erde und Himmel*

The three volume work, *Erde und Himmel, Ein Tagebuch* [Earth and Heaven, A Journal] is a compilation of spiritual thoughts and experiences of Adrienne von Speyr that von Balthasar carefully collected between November 1, 1940, when Adrienne converted to Catholicism, until September 17, 1967, the day of her death. Because this spiritual journal is arranged chronologically and not thematically, ideas and thoughts on various subjects are scattered unsystematically throughout the three volumes. For the purposes of our study, we will consider several passages from the second and third volumes. Because these passages, that address marriage or the relationship between the sexes, represent brief thoughts and reflections rather than complete discourses, they are presented here simply in chronological order. Rather than attempt to bring them together into some kind of unity, we will see how they are complemented and supplemented in our consideration of *Theologie der Geschlechter* in section 8.3.

8.2.1 Marriage as a Christian State of Life

In a journal entry from February 1948, Adrienne speaks of marriage as a state of life. Firstly, she notes that Adam and Eve were considered partners or “compagnons” [companions] in Paradise, rather than spouses. They lived in the only state of life that existed. But with the fall into sin, they exclude themselves from this original state of life. They cannot return. Adrienne explains that at this point, Adam and Eve are in the state of marriage.¹ However, they are not yet in the *Christian* state of marriage

On the Cross, Christ founds the *Christian* state of marriage. The Son receives the sacrament of marriage from the Father, the moment that he takes on the Cross from him. Indeed, the Son founds the state of marriage within his own mission to redeem the world. In this way, marriage becomes a means of redemption. Here, Adrienne reiterates that there does not exist a third state: “The Lord over-fulfills in the Church what the fruitfulness of Adam and Eve in Paradise would have been. As it would have been, we do not know.

¹NB IX, 434, (den. 1953, February 1948): “Kann man von Adam und Eva sagen, sie seien Verheiratete? Sie sind einfach Gefährten, compagnons. Und von da aus bleibt alles offen. Es gibt nur einen Stand, in dem sie stehen, weil sie in Gott sind und Gott sie so gemacht hat.”

Moreover, we do not need to know, because the Lord now is sufficient as the ideal. And marriage becomes a way of reference to this ideal, while the state of the counsels tries to live forth from this ideal.”²

8.2.2 The Uniqueness of Married Love

In a journal entry from October 1948, Adrienne contemplates the uniqueness of the love between man and woman and that between Christ and his Church:

Erotic love is absolutely personal and unique. In her love for her husband, a wife does not simply love every man. And in his love for his wife, a husband does not love every woman. Here there is an affinity to divine love. In the love of one’s neighbor, I cannot stop at one person: I must love everyone who encounters me, who needs me. However, I owe it to my bridegroom to love him uniquely. If God is the reason for which we ought to love all fellow men, he, as a Trinitarian God, is also the foundation of exclusive love, just as the Son only loves *one* Bride: the Church.³

The Lord loves all men through the Church. But there are not two different “parallel” loves. The same God is one and triune. Love in God is the same love with which Christ loves the Church in an exclusive way.

8.2.3 Is Marriage the Highest Form of Love?

In a journal entry from August 1949, Adrienne considers whether marriage is the highest form of love. She notes that because we are human, we tend to think in sensory terms. Therefore, we often immediately associate fruitfulness with the bodily realm, even though the Church understands that the body is an expression of the Spirit. Adrienne elaborates:

The Church, when she blesses a marriage, gives to the spouses something spiritual which becomes integrated into their human fruitfulness. This does not mean, however, that she, as Bride of the Lord, participates in human fruitfulness other than through the fact that the spouses are members of the Church in the world. For if sexual intercourse really were the highest realization of the relationship between Christ and the Church, where would this ecclesial relationship be found in the Church’s consecration of religious?⁴

Adrienne explains that when “God saw that it was good,” he saw that the creation of man and woman was good for *this world*. However, *in heaven*, where one does not marry, another good exists. The love that exists in heaven between brother and sister is so much more than that which can exist in this world. Therefore, it is false to assume that the highest form of love is found in earthly marriage. Matrimonial love remains a *sign* for the more intense and lively love that exists between Christ and his Church. The saints embody this heavenly love; for them, it is more existential than worldly love. Adrienne concludes: “They

²NB IX, 434-435.

³NB IX, 491, (den. 2028, October 1948).

⁴NB X, 77-78, (den. 2125, August 1949).

[the saints] have followed a prophetic existence, while they with their love on earth have proclaimed eternity in time.”⁵

8.2.4 Sexual Love Without Calculation

In a journal entry from 1952, Adrienne underlines the importance of complete openness to God in the conjugal realm and spells out the dangers of “birth regulation”:

It remains simply true that Catholic marriage as sacrament demands an unlimited self-surrender of the spouses insofar as Catholic marriage ought to be an image of the love of Christ and the Church, a love that is incalculable. For this reason, in Catholic marriage, the child is never to be excluded as an end of marriage. If young married people only have sexual intercourse according to the methods of birth control, then they cripple the actual meaning of the sacrament and distance themselves, at the same time, from the life of the Church. The Church has a right to expect that all the essential ends of marriage remain alive in sacramental marriages. [...] If one has safeguarded oneself against the consequences and against the risk of self-surrender, then the responsibility for the act is diminished and the surrender is taken into one's own management. So also, extramarital sexual relations can be “switched” on and off without much danger from time to time. Every young couple that is struggling financially, will exaggerate its situation to an extreme and will seek less earnestly to remedy the material difficulties, because the possibility will always remain to make it through without having children. The I-Thou relationship will barely be able to be protected from egoism. Also, the spiritual growth, bestowed on parents with the arrival of children, does not come about. The fullness of love is not reached and the spouses do not become fully responsible people. They will represent a generation becoming extinct and thus exposed to all the dangers of decadence. Their bond will be endangered in the long run: trivial motives will be played up as reasons for divorce. The husband, if he enters into a new relationship, will pay his childless wife less alimony and thus will make the decision more quickly to divorce. The putty, that the children provide, is lacking: both with respect to the growing responsibilities of both parents and to their common joys. The couple, rather, will endeavor to find a looser form of living together.⁶

Adrienne appears quite prophetic in her intuitions regarding the destructive elements on the family inherent in the developing methods of birth control that were just beginning to surface ever so slightly in the 1950's.

In the same journal entry, Adrienne lists a number of difficulties that arise when the number of children is deliberately limited. Firstly, it is more difficult to raise few rather than many children because children in small families often grow up to be spoiled and egocentric. Secondly, children of small families are less equipped to face the struggles of

⁵NB X, 78.

⁶NB X, 126-127, (den. 2168, early summer 1952).

life that await them later on. Thirdly, Adrienne points out that a medical doctor will seldom tell an expectant mother and father that they will regret having the child. No matter how great the apprehension may be before the child is born, a new-born child most often brings joy to the family. Fourthly, when the spouses are open to bringing forth new life, this openness will not only bind them closer together, but will also have a life-affirming effect on their other children. Adrienne concludes: "Under real serious difficulties can a limiting be endured. But a Catholic marriage should never be entered into in foresight of the employment of such a method."⁷

8.2.5 Sexuality, Eucharist and Prayer

In a journal entry from August 1957, Adrienne considers the relationship between sexuality, the Eucharist and prayer. She notes that man and woman are related in a *horizontal* way to each other, but in a *vertical* way to God. Their horizontal relationship remains alive only as long as the vertical relationship is nurtured. When the horizontal dimension no longer relates to the vertical, sin enters into the relationship. Ultimately, the Eucharist broadens the horizontal dimension between man and woman so that the vertical dimension (God) finds more of a foundation to take root. As the perfect intersection between the vertical and horizontal, the Eucharist unites all men to each other and to God in a universal way. It is completely "flesh," but it is no longer centered in the "man-woman carnal relationship" [*Fleischverhältnis Mann-Frau*], but in that of Christ-mankind, represented in the union between Christ and the Church.⁸

Adrienne uses the example of the original paradisaical relationship between the sexes to show the link between the giving of man and woman to each other and their prayer to God. She affirms that the Eucharist encompasses the sexual and the spiritual completely. Indeed, the Eucharist is the perfect union between the bodily and the spiritual realms:

Originally, the relationship of the sexes was thought to be very close to the prayer relationship of men to God. The more perfect the self-surrender of the spouses, the greater the opening to God. All immoral sexual behavior is a distancing from the nearness between sex and prayer. The Eucharist becomes the complete mediation between flesh and prayer. In the sexual: neither tearing along, nor coldness and passivity. Only an act of self-surrender and allowing to happen. If this horizontal act is done honestly, then it is prayer.⁹

Therefore, the self-surrender of the spouses in the conjugal act is analogous to the self-surrender to God in prayer. In the conjugal act, each spouse gives to the other without reserve. In prayer, they give themselves over to God so that he may do with them as he pleases. Adrienne underlines that the conjugal act is to be carried out in a certain "aloneness before God." This exclusive aloneness before God is sometimes not preserved. For example, in prostitution, the numerous partners of the prostitute take the place of God as witness. Another example is that of the adulterous spouse whose illicit partners exclude God

⁷NB X, 127.

⁸Cf. NB X, 248.

⁹NB X, 248. (den. 2256, August 1957).

as witness. However, Adrienne emphasizes that it is far from indiscretion for God to witness to the intimate, chaste, sexual exchange between husband and wife. God gives Christian spouses the task "to become one flesh." Therefore, not only do they love the task because God has given it to them, but also they love that he is present with them to witness to their love.¹⁰

8.3 *Theologie der Geschlechter*

In *Theologie der Geschlechter*¹¹ [*Theology of the Sexes*], Adrienne examines conjugal love in the light of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Church. The reflections that make up *Theologie der Geschlechter* are fruit of a particular spiritual experience Adrienne had on December 8, 1946, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.¹² Regarding the unique contribution of this work, Balthasar explains in the "Publisher's Foreword":

The novelty was to view the sexual sphere together with the theological sphere on all levels of the latter: from the Trinitarian to the incarnational to the ecclesiological; on the one hand, theology receives a whole new embodiment, on the other hand, the sexual sphere, as perhaps never before, receives permanent access to the contents of theology.¹³

Thus, according to von Balthasar, Adrienne's reflections on sexuality are unique in that sexuality is re-inserted into its proper place among all areas of theology. In this mutual integration, sexuality and theology are to be understood in their inherent concreteness.

Addressing the same phenomenon but in different terms than von Balthasar, Adrienne explains the delicate balance that is to be maintained when attempting to articulate concrete aspects of the faith and those which are seemingly somewhat abstract:

The secular clergy has allowed the doctrine of the faith to become more and more abstract and the concrete aspects [of the faith] are restricted to something that seems *to him* to be concrete, like the sexual. For this reason 'practical counseling' is given. But what is supposedly abstract ought to be made fully concrete also, for that is what in truth is the most concrete: that which is embedded in the all sensible-concrete, in all that is generally

¹⁰Cf. NB X, 248-249: "Umgekehrt: wer es liebt, eine erhaltene Sendung auszuführen, der liebt auch die Mitwisserschaft dessen, der ihn gesandt hat. Deshalb ist die Zeugenschaft Gottes beim Akt der Gatten keine Indiskretion."

¹¹A. von Speyr, *Theologie der Geschlechter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1969). Hereafter cited as NB XII.

¹²Cf. NB IX, 244-249. As described in these pages of the *Tagebuch*, Adrienne's experience was mysterious, mystical and spiritual. Above all, it was made clear to Adrienne that, with the guidance of von Balthasar, her spiritual director, she was to articulate a truly Catholic explanation [*rechten katholischen Aufklärung*] of the relationship between the sexes. This explanation would not at all come forth as fruit from some kind of psychoanalytic exercise. "H.U. soll anderes tun als psychoanalysieren! Er darf aber als der sprechen, der schon damals begleitet hat."

¹³H.U. von Balthasar, Publisher's Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Theologie der Geschlechter*, 7.

human.¹⁴

Therefore, on the one hand, the mysteries of the faith should be understood in a concrete way. On the other hand, the things that may appear concrete, such as human behavior, ethics and morality, should be understood in their underlying mystery. In *Theologie der Geschlechter*, Adrienne explains human sexuality concretely in the light of Catholic theology. Von Balthasar explains that she draws not from mere speculation, but from experience [*Erfahrung*],¹⁵ as understood in Volumes V and VI of the *posthumous works* [*Nachlasswerke*]. Only by taking into account all the nuances and reading these within their own context can one grasp accurately Adrienne's contributions.¹⁶

One basic point for Adrienne lies in her claim that the Church has been remiss in not addressing adequately the sexual, conjugal giving of man and woman. In her introduction to *Theologie der Geschlechter*, Adrienne points out that the Church has had a tendency to ignore the sexual sphere. This attitude began at the very birth of the Church as Jesus hung on the cross. Adrienne writes: "The Lord was naked on the cross. The binding down of the body was the beginning of the Church's desire not to see. One should at least know that it is the Church that covers the nakedness. She can have good reasons for this. But all too often she has forgotten that there is the nakedness of the Lord."¹⁷ Reminding the reader that the whole body was created by God, even in its most intimate aspects, Adrienne notes that over the last hundred years the Church has withdrawn from discussing the sexual sphere.¹⁸ Sexuality, however, must be understood precisely by integrating it into a Christian,

¹⁴NB XII, 232. Emphasis (italics) mine. Adrienne could be referring to a number of things here. However, the past tendency of theologians to interpret sexual morality in only a "manualistic" way is a good example of shrinking what appears concrete into something even more basic without trying to penetrate the divine mysteries in which sexuality is rooted. In more recent years, there has been a desire to articulate the underlying theological anthropological and sacramental mysteries of human sexuality. This is precisely what Adrienne von Speyr strives to do. Cf. NB XII, 10. Here, A. notes that the priest should witness the birth of a child at least once: "Den Dingen ins Auge sehen; keine Flucht vor dem Sexuellen. Hat der Beichtvater das rechte, offene Verhältnis zum Körperlichen, so kann er auch im Beichtstuhl viel besser helfen. Im Grunde müßte jeder Priester einmal bei einer Geburt dabeigewesen sein; das wäre menschlich ohne weiteres tragbar. Auch die Medizinstudenten sind im ersten klinischen Semester anwesend, bevor sie selbst praktizieren." Cf. NB XII, 162-163. A. warns against the Church becoming too spiritual: "Heute ist die Kirche so 'geistig' geworden, daß der Leib der Welt nicht mehr von ihr befruchtet wird. Die Kirche selbst aber muß Leib sein, indem sie Christus empfängt, austrägt, zur Welt und in die Welt bringt. Sonst ist sie nicht Braut Christi, was sie nur sein kann in der Nachfolge der Mutter Christi, in ihrer jungfräulichen Fruchtbarkeit. Die Eucharistie müßte stets neu zum befruchtenden Akt werden, der in der Liebe zum Herrn bis zum Ende ausgetragen wird."

¹⁵This is a type of "being admitted into" the spiritual experience of another. Cf. section 3.1.

¹⁶Cf. NB XII, 9.

¹⁷NB XII, 11. Cf. NB XII, 24. Adrienne does not shy away from criticizing certain ecclesial documents that attempt to set the ends of marriage against each other in a type of technical arm wrestling over which end is more important: "Ebenso wenn die Frau nur das Kind wollte, ohne in der Einheit mit dem Geist des Mannes zu sein; das wäre etwas Isoliertes, bloße Berechnung. Man sollte deshalb die 'Ehezwecke' nicht so auseinandergliedern, wie neuere kirchliche Verlautbarungen das tun. Die Folge wird sein, daß die Kirche selber entsprechend paragrafisiert wird und ihre wahre Einheit---im Geist mit dem Herrn---nirgends mehr hervortritt."

¹⁸Since the reflections in *Theologie der Geschlechter* were contributed in 1946, this would indicate that Adrienne is alluding to the time frame more or less from 1850 to 1950. Nowadays, perhaps some say the Church brings up sexuality too much, indeed that she is fixated on the topic. In the wake of *Humanae Vitae*,

ecclesial, christological and Trinitarian understanding.¹⁹

One way sexuality is integrated into a theological and ecclesial understanding lies in the way man and woman are to become Church, the masculine through the feminine and the feminine through the masculine, but in different ways as Adrienne explains:

[The man] pays with a different coin than the woman. But while the man becomes a body spiritually, the woman must hand over her spirit in the physical: she should give her approval to be one body with the man. She must be introduced considerably by the man's spirit into this approval to be naked body for him, just as the Church is introduced into uncoveredness by the Lord.²⁰

Therefore, "to become Church" means that the husband and wife are inserted, concretely, bodily and spiritually, into the Christ-Church union.

That man and woman "play with different coins," as Adrienne says, is exemplified in the way each approaches the sexual act. On the one hand, when the man draws near to the woman, he is somewhat different than the way he is at his day to day work, for example. The tension between the two images that the man has of himself makes up part of his spiritual fruitfulness. The woman, on the other hand, is much more herself when the man draws her close. She experiences fluctuations in her spiritual makeup, but they are weaker. Therefore, while the woman tends towards unity or "oneness," the man tends towards "twoness." Adrienne notes, for example, that during sexual intercourse, the man can have many thoughts come to him, but the woman experiences a confirmation of her being.²¹

For man and woman to become Church means, too, that they are to acknowledge the sacramental character of their sexual union. Comparing a hasty sexual union to the hurried and thoughtless reception of Holy Communion, Adrienne writes:

For the Christian, the sexual lies embedded in the sacramental, not least of all in the Eucharist. Jesus took bread, thanked the Father, blessed it, broke it and shared it with the words: This is my body. We pounce on the bread, because we are hungry and we forget to give thanks to God. We forget the blessing, the breaking and the sharing. Everyone takes for himself what he wants.²²

Familiaris Consortio and *Donum Vitae* (the document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) some theologians argue that the Church is obsessed with human sexuality. However, it is important to realize that if the Church has not spoken on these things for many years (or centuries as the case may be), then she must now try to catch up. In addition, she responds to the times. In the last forty years, at least in the United States, what many call a "sexual revolution" has taken place. The Church, then, especially under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, has tried to warn against improper sexual conduct and to articulate a deeper theological understanding of human sexuality.

¹⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 11: "Deshalb ist es wichtig, daß heute die Frage gesamthaft, ohne Scheu und öffentlich aufgegriffen werden, und zwar nicht in der Isolierung der sexuellen Sphäre, wo sie nicht lösbar sind, sondern in der Integration ins Gesamtmenschliche, Christliche, Kirchliche, Christologische und Trinitarische." Cf. also *NB XII*, 142: "Manche Verhältnisse in der Liebe lassen sich in leiblichen Vergleichen ausdrücken; und wenn wir sündenfrei sind, brauchen wir solche Vergleiche auch nicht zu scheuen."

²⁰*NB XII*, 12.

²¹Cf. *NB XII*, 13-14.

²²*NB XII*, 14.

Thus, in *Theologie der Geschlechter*, Adrienne lays the groundwork for a sacramental understanding of the sexual relationship between husband and wife. Through a deeper understanding of the sacramentality of conjugal sexuality, Christian spouses are less likely to “pounce on the bread” and more likely to recall and revere the profound gift of their sexual relationship.

Von Balthasar divided *Theologie der Geschlechter* into two parts: Part I entitled “*Geschlecht, Kirche, Gott*” [*Sex, Church, God*] and Part II entitled “*Zwischen Eva und Maria*” [*Between Eve and Mary*]. Part I addresses the following topics: the Trinitarian foundations of sexuality, the roles of leading and being led in the relationship between man and woman, topics related to the time leading up to marriage, the conjugal act from the perspective of the man and of the woman, sexuality and Spirit, sexuality and prayer, sexuality and sacrament and sexuality as role before God. Part II treats the following topics: Paradise and the fall from grace, Virgin and Mother, pregnancy, contractions and pain involved in giving birth, meditations on the mother’s milk and the blood that is shed during parturition and reflections on the family.

In addressing the above themes from *Theologie der Geschlechter*, this section is divided by the following subheadings:

- ▶ 8.3.1 Paradise and Fall into Sin
- ▶ 8.3.2 Redeemed Conjugal Sexuality as Spiritual Embodiment
- ▶ 8.3.3 The Conjugal Act and Confession
- ▶ 8.3.4 The Conjugal Act and The Eucharist
- ▶ 8.3.5 Pregnancy and Birth
- ▶ 8.3.6 The Virgin Mary and the Birth, Nourishing and Circumcision of Jesus
- ▶ 8.3.7 Advice for Engaged Persons
- ▶ 8.3.8 Counsel for Certain Situations and Ethical Issues That Arise in Marriage.

8.3.1 Paradise and Fall into Sin

Adrienne explains that in the beginning, God created Adam and Eve to be beautiful already in the finiteness of their own form [*Gestalt*]. Yet, he inserted into this form something infinite: human fruitfulness. Thus, the finite form bore an infinite potency in itself. In this way, the beautiful form of man and woman was not something created in itself and for itself, but to reveal the beauty of God. The form of Adam and Eve was not closed in itself; rather it testified to the infiniteness of their divine begetting.²³

Adam sees God “behind” Eve, precisely because he sees the world behind her. God entrusted to Adam the tilling of the soil and the ruling over the animals.²⁴ Eve is like the quintessence [*Inbegriff*] of the earth that has been given over to Adam. Certainly, Eve is equal to Adam. Nonetheless, as woman, she is also the “field” [*Acker*] of Adam whom he must form, cultivate and fructify. On the one hand, by carrying out this task, Adam will be led to God. Furthermore, he should recognize himself in the soil, because it is the same soil

²³Cf. *NB XII*, 147.

²⁴Cf. *Gn* 1, 26; 2, 8-15.

from which he was formed. On the other hand, Eve is neither Adam, nor God; she is a mediator between Adam and God.²⁵

Man and woman in Paradise were created for each other, “next to each other”²⁶ [*nebeneinanderstehend*] and are a simile for the relationship between God and man. Later, after the fall into sin, the main focus of the man would have to be found in the woman and vice versa; the sexes will be meshed together. This “meshing” [*’neinandergreifen*] between God and man, Adrienne notes, occurs in the Son and further in the Eucharist. But what were sexual relations like before this “meshing”? Adrienne answers this difficult question in this way:

Sexual relations in Paradise? Perhaps completely without awareness of things of the flesh. There would sooner more likely have been states [or habits of love] than acts [*Zustände als Akte*]. Love would not have allowed itself to be situated in times and acts. Moreover, the number [of children] would have played no role at all: we would not have determined the number of children ourselves; they would have been accepted. He who loves, helps him who seeks love, quite often just by merely loving. This readiness [*Bereitschaft*] for love would have coincided with the act of love.²⁷

Furthermore, from the beginning, man and woman had sexual organs. But the organs belonged to the fruit that was not to be eaten; theirs was a mystery that was to remain unrevealed. “Virginal relations” [*jungfräulicher Verkehr*] were foreseen. Only after the Fall would virginity first be recognized as something separate from procreativity.²⁸

Adrienne clarifies that sexual intercourse is a *sign* of being under original sin, but it is not sinful in itself. There are still many aspects of sexual intercourse that are paradisaical. Adrienne lists them:

- ▶ In Paradise, Eve was made from Adam’s rib and Adam recognized Eve as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”
- ▶ Both of them are introduced beforehand through their relationship in Paradise into the sexual relationship.
- ▶ God blesses Adam and Eve’s post-paradisaical fruitfulness in that he gives an immortal soul to their child.
- ▶ God does not leave Adam and Eve to their own destiny. Instead, he continues to accompany them.

²⁵Cf. NB XII, 147.

²⁶Still, man was given a certain “leading” type of love and woman was given a “following” type. Cf. NB XII, 35: “So versteht man, daß die ursprüngliche (im Paradies) für Mann und Frau vorgesehene Liebe eine beidseitige reine und gleich vollkommene Liebe hätte sein sollen, auch wenn dem Mann eine führende, dem Weib eine nachfolgende Form der Liebe geschenkt war.”

²⁷Cf. NB XII, 148.

²⁸Cf. NB XII, 149: “Es war eingehülltes Geheimnis der Erkenntnis. Der Mann brauchte sich im Weib nicht zu erkennen, weil die Frucht der Erkenntnis hinterlegt war. Das zgedachte Erkennen lag nicht in der Demütigung des Weibes durch den Mann. Vorgesehen war ein ‘jungfräulicher Verkehr.’ [...] Die Jungfräulichkeit aber war erst nach dem Fall erkannt. Vorher ist der Begriff gar nicht da.”

- Also, things that are not foreseen are blessed subsequently by God.²⁹

Before the fall, in their unnoticed nakedness, Adam and Eve were completely one with each other.³⁰ The intimacy they shared was neither lust, nor indiscretion: it was a result of their oneness. Yet, their unity was conditioned by being one with God. This unity did not originate from Adam and Eve; rather they adopted the already existing unity of God in order to be united themselves. After the fall, Adam and Eve attempt to reproduce this unity by covering themselves with animal skins³¹ and through the sexual act. Adrienne explains that God's grace can restore the lost unity again, but the former state of true nakedness would have to be sought only through a "merit" [*Verdienst*]. The fig leaves, the animal skins and the clothes are all penitential. Adrienne concludes: "Only in avowal [*Bekennnis*] and in confession [*Beichte*], as grace of the Lord and nakedness before God, does the bodily nakedness of Paradise lend itself to being won back. Concupiscence [*Begierlichkeit*] must be transformed into pure love."³²

After the fall into sin, many things are changed for Adam and Eve. They must put on animal skins that are irksome, too tight or too loose.³³ Man and woman have to toil in the garden and make tools to do the work. They injure themselves, they bleed. They experience pain. In everything, Adam and Eve experience renunciation. Nevertheless, through these experiences they are brought to new ways of thinking about God. Adrienne explains: "Every human 'minus' allows a 'plus' of God to be made visible."³⁴

²⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 149. Regarding the last point, Adrienne gives the example of the child of an unmarried woman to show how God blesses certain situations subsequently. The child can be received into the Church and go on to bring about further fruitfulness.

³⁰Adrienne draws a comparison between Adam and Eve's unity and that shared by the Father and the Son. Cf. *NB XII*, 159: "Im übrigen gibt es das Leibliche. Adam und Eve waren nackt und besaßen einander in der Nacktheit. Sie besaßen einander ähnlich, wie in Gott Vater und Sohn sich besitzen. In der völligen Intimität die die Personen nicht aufheben. In einer Einheit, die die ganze Vielheit der Liebe in sich schließt. Sie waren geschaffen, um sich immerfort aneinander zu freuen. Ihre Leiblichkeit war das vollkommene Instrument, das die Einigung ihrer Personen ausdrückt."

³¹Cf. *Gn* 3, 21: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them."

³²*NB XII*, 151-152.

³³Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Foreword* to: A. von Speyr, *Theologie der Geschlechter*, 7-8. Regarding Adrienne's paradisaical and post-paradisaical descriptions, von Balthasar notes in the Foreword: "Besonders fragmentarisch und bis zum Widerspruch auseinanderklingend sind die Äußerungen über das Thema der paradiesischen Geschlechtlichkeit; man kann über diese Hinweise von vornherein mit überlegenen Lächeln hinweggehen; wer indes die patristische Tradition (und anderseits Hinweise von Freud) kennt, wird hier wenigstens aufhören, weil das alte Thema von der Differenz zwischen dem Sinn und Zustand der Geschlechtlichkeit vor und nach dem 'Sündenfall', der 'Erbsünde' wieder aufgegriffen erscheint, man mag diesen beiden Begriffen einen noch so modernen unentmythologisierten Sinn beilegen. Nimmt man die fragmentarischen und unter sich schwer vereinbaren Andeutungen zusammen, so wird man von ihnen her nur so viel sagen können, daß die Paradiesessage vom Zustand ursprünglicher Nacktheit und Umschuld, aber auch Fruchtbarkeit der Gesamtleiblichkeit, vom Zusammenhang zwischen sündigem Wissendwerden und Entstehung des Schamgefühls, von der Bedeckung mit Tierfellen und---nach der Vertreibung aus dem Paradies---der Vermehrung nach der heute gebotenen Art auf geheimnisvolle Zusammenhänge verweist, Dinge, die für uns nicht mehr zu lüften sind."

³⁴*NB XII*, 152-153.

Before the fall, sexuality was latent in man and woman,³⁵ but afterwards, they learn to relate to each other sexually:

Now the man opens in the woman a way for himself. He creates in the 'thou' not only an image of himself, but he places within something new in which he entrusts to the thou, by which he does not progress by himself and which was required by womanly fruitfulness. In the sin, it is almost as if the man refused to be fruitful in her and he must now give over his fruit to the woman in a new responsibility in order to pursue in her the unfolding of his own mystery.³⁶

In the time between the fall and the Incarnation, the sexual relationship is inclined towards Redemption. Adrienne notes that it is as if the light of Christ shines back not only over the entire Old Covenant, but also back over Creation. It shows how earnest and serious God was when he created the sexes. Both the paradisaal and post-paradisaal states of the sexes receive their full meaning in the advent and redemption of Christ.³⁷

8.3.2 Redeemed Conjugal Sexuality as Spiritual Embodiment

After the fall, conjugal sexuality would need to be redeemed in Christ. But Christ's Redemption remains a Trinitarian event. Therefore, the triune God remains both the model and the source for the physical and spiritual fruitfulness of the redeemed conjugal relationship: while the Son is begotten by the Father, the Holy Spirit emerges continuously from both. This occurs in such a way that it is impossible to know all the spiritual fruits of God. Just as in one conjugal act not only can a child be created, but also something spiritual for the family, for the Church, and perhaps even conversions and vocations to the consecrated life.³⁸

Adrienne draws a number of comparisons between Trinitarian begetting and sexual love. In the Trinity, the Father would be "feminine" in the way that he loves man constantly and in the way he begets the Son and allows the Spirit to emerge. Yet, the Son too can rest in a "feminine contemplation of the Father" only to become "masculine" in relation to the Father when he brings the world back to him in redemption. We see this played out in the conjugal act. For example, it is easier for the man to identify the high points, while the woman's fulfillment, both physical and spiritual, is more diffuse. If she is certain of the man's love, it can almost be indifferent to her whether he comes to her today or tomorrow. Thus, as the Son remains in contemplation of the Father, the woman remains ready to be awakened by the man.³⁹

Furthermore, as we saw in *Korinther I* and *Epheserbrief*, man and woman are *imago Trinitatis* not only in their fruitfulness, but also in the roles each embodies:

³⁵Before the fall, neither the "concentrated grace" of the sacraments, nor sexual fruitfulness were necessary. After the fall, both became necessary. Cf. *NB XII*, 223: "Wie die Sakramente erst durch die Sünde nötig wurden als *Konzentrate* der kirchlichen Fruchtbarkeit, so wurde nach der Sünde die Konzentration der leiblichen Fruchtbarkeit auf besondere Akte der Zeugung usf. notwendig."

³⁶*NB XII*, 154.

³⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 155.

³⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 21-22.

³⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 22-23.

The submission of the Son to the Father is the Trinitarian justification of the submission of the wife to the husband. Were the Father not so powerful and demanding, the Son could not be so powerless and self-surrendering on the Cross. If there exists such a tremendous self-surrender as that of the Son and that of the wife, then both, in their quality of vessels, can manifest the abundance of what can fill them. Both in divine Trinitarian love and in human sexual love, it is the the Spirit who brings about the exchange. When the woman receives the man's seed, then this seed remains in her a witness to the vitality of the Father, until the seed and the egg unite (which can take a few hours). From that point on, the developing child becomes a witness to the vitality of both parents. In the child, the traits of the father can no longer be separated from the traits of the mother. Correspondingly, the redemptive work of God in the world is the common fruit of the power [*Potenz*] of the Father and the pure self-surrender of the Son, in the form of the powerlessness on the cross, and the indissoluble unity of the traits of both will be produced by the Holy Spirit. The genuine unity becomes possible precisely in that both persons involved (Father and Son, husband and wife) retain the highest possible *polarity* in love, not the highest possible similarity. This polarity guarantees, in human beings, the equality of love, and, in God, the equality of nature.⁴⁰

In this citation, several themes emerge: *submission* of the Son to the Father and of the wife to the husband, *procreation* as act of God, husband and wife and *Redemption* as an act carried out by the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. In all these, Adrienne points out that unity is achieved when the persons involved (Father, Son and Spirit, husband and wife) are able to maintain a certain *polarity*. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit become one because they are infinitely distinct, while husband and wife become bodily and spiritually one flesh while each maintains his distinctness. In allowing the other to be *other*, the spouses become more united.

⁴⁰NB XII, 23. "Die Unterwerfung des Sohnes unter den Vater ist die trinitarische Rechtfertigung der Unterwerfung des Weibes unter den Mann. Der Sohn könnte am Kreuz nicht so ohnmächtig und hingegeben sein, wenn der Vater nicht so mächtig und fordernd wäre. Wenn es eine so große Hingabe gibt wie des Sohnes und die des Weibes, dann verweisen beide wie ein Gefäß auf das Übermaß dessen, was beide erfüllen kann. Der Geist aber ist es, der in Gott und auch im Geschlecht den Austausch bewirkt. Wenn das Weib den männlichen Samen empfängt, dann bleibt dieser Same in ihr Zeuge für die Lebendigkeit des Vaters, bis Same und Ei sich vereinigen (vielleicht ein paar Stunden). Von da wird das werdende Kind zum Zeugnis für die Lebendigkeit beider Eltern. Die Züge des Vaters sind im Kind nicht mehr von den Zügen der Mutter zu sondern. Entsprechend ist das Erlösungswerk Gottes in der Welt die gemeinsame Frucht der Potenz des Vaters und der reinen Hingabe (Kreuzsohnmacht) des Sohnes, und die unlösbare Einheit der Züge beider wird durch den Heiligen Geist hergestellt. Die wirkliche Einheit wird gerade dadurch möglich, daß die beiden Beteiligten (Vater und Sohn, Mann und Weib) sich in der Liebe möglichst *polar* verhalten, nicht möglichst ähnlich; in der Polarität wird die Gleichwertigkeit der Liebe (in Gott des Wesens) gewährleistet." Cf. NB XII, 143-144. Mystery always remains a part of the conjugal act on account of this polarity. It is the same in God: "Nie würde der Sohn sich einüben, Vater zu werden, denn die Liebe hat für ihn nur Sinn, wenn der Vater ewig Vater bleibt."

Spouses unite themselves in a particular way in the conjugal act. Although on the surface much in the sexual act can seem mundane and predictable, Adrienne points out that unforeseen surprises arise in every bodily encounter. It is as if different notes on the piano are played in a different way and each new combination reveals a new aspect of God's love and the love of the spouses for each other. Adrienne elaborates:

God is infinite and he wants to reveal to the lovers always new characteristics of his love. The bodily things appear somehow to repeat and become familiar, but they are only an instrument of a very comprehensive giving over [*Hingabe*]. And seen in a Christian way, the giving over [*Hingabe*] of men is never clearly separated from God's giving over [*Hingabe*]: Trinity, Incarnation, Eucharist, Church. And through the example of sexuality one is allowed to see that all God's tasks, even when they seem monotonous on a human level, are always infinitely diverse.⁴¹

Thus, in the conjugal act, the spouses experience the many facets of God's love when they allow their giving over to be an imitation of, and participation in, God's giving over.

Moreover, when intimacy between the spouses is truly lived, their bodies fructify their souls. This is rooted more in the work of the Son than in Creation, as Adrienne explains:

When intimacy between the spouses is lived correctly, their bodies too should be made able to fructify their souls through the discovered joy, to bestow on it certain vibrations that carry it further. God gives this 'inspiration' not so much from Creation, but from the work of the Son, who in his perpetual contemplation of the Father brought this 'inspiredness' into the human body.⁴²

In this way, one can say that the conjugal act is a gift of God marked indelibly in a Trinitarian way where the Father is the Creator, the Son is the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit instills the inspiration.⁴³

⁴¹*NB XII*, 106-107: "Gott ist unendlich und will den Liebenden immer neue Züge seiner Liebe offenbaren. Die leiblichen Dinge scheinen sich irgendwie zu wiederholen und vertraut zu werden, aber sie sind nur Werkzeug einer viel umfassenderen Hingabe. Und christlich gesehen ist Hingabe des Menschen nie reinlich zu trennen von Gottes Hingabe: Trinität, Menschwerdung, Eucharistie, Kirche. [...] Und am Beispiel des Geschlechtlichen läßt sich ablesen, daß alle Aufträge Gottes, auch wenn sie menschlich eintönig erscheinen, immer unendlich mannigfaltig sind."

⁴²*NB XII*, 101.

⁴³Although, Adrienne draws analogies between Trinity and the spouses, she does not develop a comprehensive model. Above all, she notes that often the man characterizes the Father and the woman, in her giving over, characterizes the Son. Cf. *NB XII*, 45. However, she also notes that the man reveals the Son and the woman characterizes Mary and the Church. In one place, she brings the child into the analogy. Thus, the father is analogous to the Father, the mother to the Son and the child to the Holy Spirit. Cf. *NB XII*, 140-141: "In seiner vollkommensten Gestalt ist der Akt trinitarisch zu verstehen: der Mann kennzeichnet den Vater, die Frau den Sohn und das Kind den Geist. Vom Augenblick an, da die Gatten nach Empfang des Sakraments den Akt begehen dürfen und sollen, läßt Gott diesen Akt nicht im Ungewissen schweben; er nimmt ihn hinein in sein dreieiniges Leben. Also muß nach göttlicher Absicht dieser Akt auch dreieinig signiert sein."

8.3.3 The Conjugal Act and Confession

Among her many insights on the sexes, Adrienne characterizes the conjugal act as a mutual revealing and awakening of the bodies and spirits of the spouses. In their nakedness, man and woman resemble the penitent who stands figuratively naked before God in the act of sacramental confession. In the sacrament of confession, the sinner longs to reveal everything to God, in short, to be “naked” before him. It is exactly in this humbling aspect of confession that the sacrament is able to bear fruit.⁴⁴ Still, sometimes the penitent hesitates to reveal everything to the confessor who administers the sacrament *in persona Christi*. For his part, the confessor must preserve the dignity of the sacrament by maintaining the sacramental seal.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the confessor is entrusted with the penitent’s sins in order to absolve them and to guard the mystery of the sacrament, just as the woman in her nakedness of body and soul is entrusted to the man, who in turn protects the mystery of her being.⁴⁶

Adrienne observes that, on the one hand, from a natural perspective, the body’s sexual constitution (and therefore, the sexual union) is limited. Sacramental confession, on the other hand, is unlimited. She continues noting that when one confesses with an attitude of openness and disponibility, the grace of confession is most effective. However, sometimes the priest may ask certain necessary questions to help the penitent make a good confession. Only in this humble openness of the “confessing child” [*Beichtkind*] can absolution be completely fruitful.⁴⁷

The conjugal act resembles sacramental confession in another way: just as each spouse does not know how much impurity he brings to the conjugal act, so too the penitent does not know how much impurity, in the eyes of God, he has collected from one confession to another. Nonetheless, God’s love purifies each “confession” whether it be sacramental or conjugal.⁴⁸ In the end, there can be no deception in true nakedness. When the bride is “revealed” by the bridegroom on their wedding night, he should not have to coax her. She is to be fully there for him to unveil, just as the Church should never want to conceal anything from the Lord. Adrienne summarizes: “Nakedness and confession are related; bodily nakedness receives its most profound precept from confession.”⁴⁹

In the conjugal act, each spouse has a distinct role. Adrienne observes that it is the man who introduces the woman to the sexual act. By introducing his wife slowly into the

⁴⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 161.

⁴⁵Cf. *CIC* 983, § 1. Cf. *NB XII*, 160. Adrienne points out that both man and woman are in a “feminine” relationship to the confessor priest. The priesthood is the highest expression of “masculinity before God”: “Dem Beichtvater gegenüber sind Mann und Frau in der weiblichen Rolle. Der Mann ist nie männlicher als im Priestertum. Wer auf das Priestertum verzichtet, verzichtet auf den höchsten Ausdruck der Männlichkeit vor Gott.”

⁴⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 130.

⁴⁷*NB XII*, 160. Adrienne is not questioning the objective grace that is conferred in confession. Rather, she is underlining the necessary personal conversion, that is aided by grace, needed to shun future temptation. The German term for penitent, *Beichtkind*, “confessing child,” accurately captures the proper confessional attitude. We are all children in Christ before the loving and merciful Father.

⁴⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 109.

⁴⁹*NB XII*, 82-83: “Nacktheit und Beichte sind verwandt; leibliche Nacktheit erhält ihr tiefes Gesetz aus der Beichte.”

act so as to not leave her behind, the husband is aware that the *fruitfulness of marriage*, which is primarily spiritual, is to be the focus, *not the bodily organs*.⁵⁰ Adrienne emphasizes the potency [*Potenz*] of the man on the one hand, and the giving over [*Hingabe*] of the woman on the other hand. In acknowledging the man's potency, the woman helps the man to realize his full capacity.⁵¹ Indeed, Adrienne writes: "The man's spontaneous unveiling fosters the giving over of the woman, while the unveiling of the woman fosters the demand and potency of the man."⁵²

In his potency, the man reveals Christ and through Christ, God, while the woman reveals to the man his capacity. In his seed, the man reveals the Son; in his potency, might and readiness, the man points out the Father. This is something that the man ought not try to disguise. In referring to 1 *Corinthians* 11, 3-5,⁵³ Adrienne states that the woman, in contrast to the man, keeps her headship veiled. As the man defines the measure of the unveiling, he is confronted, at the same time, with the origin and goal of his might: God. Meanwhile, the woman experiences something of the might of God through the man's potency.⁵⁴

Once the husband and wife come together in nakedness, the man lovingly begins to awaken the body and spirit of the woman:

The body of the woman awakes, as it were, through the loving caresses of the man: one time this part, then that one. The love caress intends to awaken each time the whole body, no: the whole person, and so awaken

⁵⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 57. Cf. *NB XII*, 69. The "sensitive" organs are not the ones that produce the fruit. They are only mediators: "Was im Geschlechtsakt gefühlt wird, ist nicht die Fruchtbarkeit. Die gefühlten Organe sind nur Vermittler. Schließlich berühren sich Hoden und Eierstöcke nie, und Nebenhoden und Gebärmutter auch nicht. So ist das Leibliche auch hierin Symbol für die geistige Fruchtbarkeit; das Wichtigste an ihr kommt von Gott und geht zu Gott." Cf. *NB XII*, 48. Adrienne notes that the man may encounter a certain timidity of the woman. This is natural: "Der Mann darf den Geschlechtsakt nicht als eine isolierte Tat ansehen, sondern muß ihn im Rahmen seines ganzen Führeramtes verstehen und verwalten. In der Frau liegt anfänglich eine gewisse Scheu: 'Was führt er im Schilde?' Auf diese Scheu muß er nicht nur mit dem Akt, sondern mit seinem ganzen Sein antworten, seine ganze Haltung, die nicht schwach werden darf, muß sie überwinden. Die Scheu gehört zur Frau; hätte sie sie nicht, so wäre dies ein Zeichen, daß sie vorweg verdorben wurde; sie würde sich dann auch nicht führen lassen wollen, sondern selber einen Führungsanspruch erheben." Cf. *NB XII*, 118.

⁵¹Cf. *NB XII*, 32.

⁵²*NB XII*, 64: "Die spontane Enthüllung des Mannes fördert deshalb die Hingabe der Frau, während die Enthüllung der Frau das Fordern des Mannes fördert." Cf. *NB XII*, 80. If the man really lives in God, the substance of his prayer will be apparent to the woman in his attitude towards her: "Lebt der Mann in Gott, so ist er Gott hingegeben und lernt im Gebet den Gehorsam der Liebe und dessen Förderung. Wenn er dann von seinem Weibe Hingabe und Gehorsam verlangt, dann nicht, um seinen Befehlen Nachdruck zu verleihen, sondern um die Hingabe des Weibes zu fördern, da er selbst im Gebet das Fördernde der Hingabe erfahren hat. Er braucht seinem Weib nicht sein Gebet zu schildern, sondern wird in seiner ganzen Haltung die Substanz seines Betens sichtbar werden lassen, so daß das Weib sich an ihn halten kann, um durch ihn die Wendung zu Gott zu erfahren."

⁵³1 Cor 11, 3-5: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven."

⁵⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 32.72-73.

the part only in the being-called-forth of the whole: the woman is the one who awakens and lives in the call of the man. And in the whole call, the loving caresses awaken 'parts' of her of which she had no consciousness at all, and which for her have no meaning except in the context of love for the man.⁵⁵

This awakening of the woman's body is not to be carried out in egotistical haste that often predominates in the sexual act. Certainly, there is a certain amount of restlessness inherent in the sexual act, whereby one's own "I" wants to express itself. But the spouses must know that there is an incarnate love that goes beyond this restlessness. This love is experienced in love of God, of Christ, of the Mother of God, in the love of simple obedience and in the calmness of the love that exists between the Lord and his Church. Loving spouses can learn from this greater love what it means to linger and to know what pure joy is.⁵⁶

In their touching, the spouses bring a different world to each other, a world of openness to God. Adrienne describes it this way:

'I touches the beginning of 'Thou.' It experiences its opening in 'Thou.' And 'Thou' is everything that 'I' is not: love, perfection, since it is given as gift from God. That was the original meaning of love in Creation: that God gives everything to the one through the other and that the limitedness of 'I' is no end, only a beginning. No conclusion, only opening. Participation in the other, where 'I' finds a new beginning in 'Thou.' 'In the touching,' the woman says, 'you bring me your world, and your world is the whole world, because you bring love.' (World here not in an innerworldly way, but in the sense of fullness and totality.)⁵⁷

More than an encounter between the 'I' and the 'Thou,' the conjugal act "personifies" [*entpersönlicht*] the spouses into the Church, insofar as it becomes a part of the relationship between Christ and his Church. In this, Adrienne clarifies, there is no strict boundary between "sacramental grace" and "personal experience" in the sexual relationship. The spouses' mutual self-giving, their prayer, the prayer of the Church and the Lord---all these can belong to the coming together of grace and experience.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Cf. *NB XII*, 45-46. Cf. *NB XII*, 99. Here, A. compares the spouses' kisses with the experience of the Church "tasting" the Lord: "Im Kuß der Gatten geht der Geschmack des einem in den andern über, so kann das Wort der Kirche den Geschmack des Wortes des Herrn haben."

⁵⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 139-140.

⁵⁷*NB XII*, 113. Cf. *NB XII*, 66. The woman experiences sexual arousal in a more diffused way than the man. Adrienne sees paradisaic roots in this: "[Der Mann] besitzt in der obern Körperhälfte kein Organ, in dem er seine Lust konzentrieren könnte. Anders die Frau, die ihre Brüste hat. Dadurch behält Eva, auch wenn sie den Mann verführt hat, ihm gegenüber eine Art Unschuld, die ihm abgeht. Er ist der Wissendere, derjenige, der die Sünde vollzieht, bei ihm erfolgt das Erwachen der unteren Hälfte. Ihm bleibt in der obern keine Fruchtbarkeit mehr. Durch ihre Brust bleibt die Frau eine Art Brücke zum Paradies." Cf. *NB XII*, 70. The woman also experiences a "splintering of spirit" that is brought into order through bodily love that is united to divine love: "Es gibt bei der Frau eine Müdigkeit und Zersplitterung des Geistes, die durch die leibliche Liebe ganz in Ordnung gebracht werden kann, wenn diese leibliche Liebe eine Einheit bildet mit der Liebe Gottes."

⁵⁸*NB XII*, 128. Cf. *NB XII*, 85. Not everything always unfolds smoothly in the conjugal act, especially in the beginning of marriage. But this is not necessarily bad: "Es kann eine gute Vorsehung, wenn der Akt anfänglich gar nicht voll gelingt. So daß es für beide eine Hinführung gibt."

8.2.4 The Conjugal Act and the Eucharist

If Adrienne perceives similarities between the mutual self-revelation of the spouses in the conjugal act and sacramental confession, she also sees similarities between the consummation of the conjugal act and the Eucharist. For one, she notes how the bodily presence in the act is evidence of a love that is already physically and spiritually present, just as the reception of Holy Communion is a testifying act to the presence of Christ, body and soul, in the Blessed Sacrament.⁵⁹ Furthermore, in the consummation, the woman receives much more than what is necessary to impregnate her. Even though nothing of the man's semen is lost because it is absorbed into the woman, only one sperm cell is needed for impregnation. Likewise, with reception of the Eucharist, the believer receives much more from the Lord than what he can use. He receives not just its immediate benefit, but a heavenly abundance of grace.⁶⁰

In appreciating the inherent analogies between the Eucharist and the conjugal act, spouses can be drawn into a deeper understanding of the sacrament of matrimony. Adrienne observes:

From here arises a further access to the understanding of the sacrament of marriage. When the sexual act occurs in sacrament, in blessing and in obedience to the Church, then a special transformation of substance occurs on the sacramental level. Just as the communicant cannot say exactly what and how much he has received, so too the wife cannot say what she receives from the spouse. [...] The sexual act as material is 'super-formed' [*überformt*] by sacramental grace. [...] Even in the act itself, the partners must want to be obedient to the meaning of the sacrament, as every sacramental reception assumes a willingness towards the already special grace inherent in it.⁶¹

⁵⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 27.

⁶⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 126. Cf. *NB XII*, 133. Adrienne notes that in the sexual realm the results can be weighed, however not in the spiritual realm: "Im Geschlechtlichen ist der physische Beitrag des Mannes (etwa drei Gramm Samen) und der Frau (etwa sechs Pfund Substanz) and das Kind wägbare. Was der Herr gibt, ist unwägbare und kennt kein Maß." Cf. *NB XII*, 75. At the moment when the woman receives the man's seed, the woman is likened to Mary who is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation: "Die Frau aber wird in diesem Augenblick durch den Mann in die Rolle Marias geführt. Maria steht inmitten eines Geschehens, das sie übertagt, sie ausleert—aber ausleert als Teilhabe am Ausgeleertsein des Mannes, der in ihr zum Sohn wird. Ihr Jawort schwebt jetzt in der gleichen offenen Suspension: wie der Sohn 'unterwegs' ist: nicht mehr im Himmel, noch nicht Mensch, sondern hingeopfert im Willen des Vaters auf etwas noch nicht Definierbares hin."

⁶¹*NB XII*, 126-127. "Von hier aus ergibt sich ein weiterer Zugang zum Verständnis des Ehesakraments. Wenn der Akt im Sakrament, im Segen und Gehorsam der Kirche erfolgt, dann ereignet sich auf sakramentaler Ebene eine besondere Verwandlung der Substanz. Wie vorhin der Kommunizierende nicht genau sagen konnte, was und wieviel er empfangen hat, so kann auch die Ehefrau nicht sagen, was sie vom Gatten erhält. [...] Der Akt als Materie wird von der sakramentalen Gnade überformt. [...] Auch im Akt selber müssen die Partner dem Sinn des Sakraments gehorsam sein wollen, wie jeder Sakramentenempfang eine Willigkeit zu der ihm je besonderen Gnade voraussetzt."

In obedience, therefore, the husband and wife become one with each other in the conjugal act, in a similar way to how they become one with Christ when receiving the Eucharist.⁶²

The conjugal act is eucharistic also in the way that the spouses must renounce themselves in order to bring about fruitfulness. When Christians receive the Eucharist, they renounce what they are in order to become the substance that the Lord wants to make of them. Adrienne explains that in renouncing his substance, 'he man initiates the renunciation of the woman. At the heart of his renunciation, the man renounces his substance in order that it becomes what the woman will make of it, namely a child if the spouses are blessed in that way. Thus, the spouses imitate the Lord's Eucharist which is ultimately pure renunciation of himself and by which he becomes what the Father wants to make of him: food for the world.'⁶³

When the Lord gives himself over to the Church, she cannot refuse him. She must take what he gives her and use it for further fructification. In the same way that the Lord cannot take back his Eucharist once he has given it, the man must give over his seed to the woman. Adrienne underlines that a child can be born from the seed and that child belongs to everybody, as does the Eucharist. The tabernacle, then, is the greatest "womb of the Church." Indeed, every particle of the Eucharist contains the Lord, just as every cell from the man's seed contains his entire potency.⁶⁴

The woman, in the eucharistic giving over of herself, resembles the Church in her relationship to the Lord.⁶⁵ Adrienne explains that throughout his life Jesus would demand

⁶²Adrienne warns against sexual relations where the spouses do not give over their spirits as well as their bodies. It is similar to receiving Holy Communion without being spiritually prepared. It is not a true Communion. Cf. *NB XII*, 31.

⁶³Cf. *NB XII*, 108: "Der Verzicht des Mannes auf seine Substanz leitet den Verzicht der Frau auf sich selber ein. Der Mann gibt ab, indem er verzichtet, die Frau nimmt auf, indem sie verzichtet. Der Mann verzichtet auf das, was sein ist, um das zu werden, was die Substanz der Frau aus ihm machen wird; die Frau aber wird zur Dienerin an der Substanz des Mannes. Dieser Verzicht begegnet wieder in der Eucharistie. Wir verzichten auf das, was wir sind, um das zu werden, was die Substanz des Herrn aus uns machen will: Nahrung der Welt. Die Gatten verzichten, um gewandelt zu werden in die zeitliche Zukunft hinein, wir verzichten in der Eucharistie, um ins ewige Leben gewandelt zu werden." Cf. *NB XII*, 134. Here, Adrienne draws an analogy between the Eucharistic species and the substances of the man and the woman: "In der Eucharistie schenkt uns der Herr seine Substanz so, daß er das Brot durch sein Wort in sein Fleisch verwandelt. Er tut es in einem Liebesakt, indem er sich in einer fremden Gestalt neu setzt. In einer Analogie zum Geschlechtsakt, worin das Weib das Brot wäre, dem der Mann seinen Samen einsenkt, und es Fleisch werden läßt; oder auch worin der Same selbst das Brot wäre, das als hingeebene Nahrung im Weib Fleisch wird." Cf. *NB XII*, 122. On the Cross, the Lord renounces himself completely for our salvation. Adrienne points out that this is an invitation to us to accompany him in his abandonment: "Die Enthüllung des Kreuzes am Karfreitag sagt nicht, daß wir in das Geheimnis seiner Verlassenheit eintreten dürfen."

⁶⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 134. By linking together the Eucharist and the conjugal act, Adrienne underscores that when spouses impede the conjugal act by using contraception or other means, their actions are sinful not only because of moral and ethical reasons, but also because of sacramental reasons. Their union, that was forged in the sacrament of marriage, is nurtured by regular reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and confession. Indeed, the Eucharist reminds spouses that they are to be united as Christ is united with his Church. Therefore, contracepting spouses who receive the Eucharist would be living in contradiction to their vows they made on their wedding day.

⁶⁵Adrienne notes that a Catholic woman can have such a strong feeling in this way that the boundaries become blurred. Cf. *NB XII*, 26-27: "Für eine Frau, die katholisch ist, kann sich die Grenze zwischen Zugehörigkeit zum Mann und zum eucharistischen Herrn verwischen."

from his apostles (who were to become the first members of his Church) that they follow after him and that they give themselves over to him. Yet, at the culminating moment of Jesus' life, as he was dying on the Cross, he is pure giving over. At the Cross, the Church does not have any demands on the Lord. At the most, she can take on demands from the Lord in order to make them known to men.⁶⁶

Furthermore, in giving themselves over to each other, man and woman become participators in divine nature. For his part, the man allows his boundaries to be widened by the woman thereby experiencing his own being more intensely. For her part, the woman "forgets or loses herself" in the man. In her attitude, we see an analogy for how all human nature participates in divine nature. Human nature, by forgetting itself in divine nature, experiences divine nature. In this way, Adrienne sheds light on understanding 2 *Peter* 1, 4 where Peter notes that all men are called to be "participators in divine nature."⁶⁷

Like marriage itself, there is a certain irrevocability inherent in the conjugal act. Adrienne observes that the man reaches a point where he feels a gathering of strength, a point of no turning back. In this, his role in procreation shows its great force and he is an image of the Father who as Creator set out on a course to create the world in six days and did not cease until his work was completed.⁶⁸ In the conjugal act, the man gives himself over in a greater way than he was prepared to. Likewise, one who accepts a call by the Lord, allows himself to be taken in by God. The Lord does much more with the one called than he ever thought he would be capable of. Both actions of giving over, that of one called by the Lord and that of the man in the conjugal act, are comparable to when a man throws himself into deep water. He can forget to breathe, but still he knows he will be saved; he just does not know exactly how it will happen.⁶⁹

When the man gives his seed over to the woman, he has carried out his role and office as leader by bestowing his potency on the woman. At this point, the man is no longer the demanding one, but the one who gives himself over: in this, he experiences the giving over of his potency in the woman's attitude of giving herself over.⁷⁰ The man wants to give everything to the woman, but instead he seems to give very little. It appears to him that a discrepancy exists between what he would like to give and the little that he can give. And yet, in the eyes of God, the man does give more because God can create much more from his seed than he can imagine.⁷¹

Receiving the man's seed, that is the fruit of his body, the woman gives it back to God so that it may become fruitful in Him. Describing the consummation of the conjugal act in spiritual terms, Adrienne underlines that the each spouse's personal experience of

⁶⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 65-66.

⁶⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 140.

⁶⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 72.

⁶⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 74-75.

⁷⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 64. Cf. *NB XII*, 73. At the point the man gives his seed over, he feels something going out of him, that Adrienne compares to the Lord's healing of the woman with a hemorrhage (cf. *Mk* 5, 25-34): "Der Same gleicht der Gnade; der Mann spürt seinen Ausgang, wie der Herr die Kraft spürt, die von ihm ausgegangen ist in der entscheidenden Berührung durch das glaubende Weib. Aber das Weib hätte ihn nicht berührt, wenn er nicht gekommen wäre." Cf. also *NB XII*, 88-89.

⁷¹Cf. *NB XII*, 105.

God becomes united:

The man feels the coming ejaculation, the woman feels later the seed flowing into her; both feel themselves inserted in an all-embracing circle. The woman: Your God has become my God, your God, who stands behind you and has given you the seed; in your seed I have received his seed. And I must give this seed again to my God, who gives it back to your God.⁷²

As man and woman feel themselves taken up in this all-embracing circle of love and grace, they experience something of the all-embracing circle of love and grace of the Trinity where the Holy Spirit as seed-bearer of the Father makes possible the Son's going out from the Father to become incarnate and coming back to the Father always in his service.⁷³

The man leads in service of the woman. Therefore, it is not by chance that weakness comes upon him when he has carried out his leadership role. In contrast to the woman's fruitfulness, the man's potency appears to have a noted limitation. Yet, in becoming weak the man recognizes and acknowledges the fruitfulness of the woman. He calls to mind that both he and his wife receive their fruitfulness in submission to the Lord.⁷⁴ Perhaps the man may feel humbled that his demand and potency seem so limited, but even before he engages in the sexual act with the woman, the man renounces himself. He experiences that the giving over of his wife is greater than what he gives.⁷⁵

Drawing from categories normally reserved for describing the life of prayer, Adrienne characterizes the "revealing and awakening" of the conjugal act as *action*, while consummation is *contemplation*. As the man's potency meets the woman's giving over, she feels as if her whole inner being becomes irrigated. Similarly, grace works in the soul in regard to fruitfulness. When the soul is able to open itself in complete contemplation, so is everything that the soul receives from God pure, fruitful substance. Therefore, a certain availability or readiness before the Lord exists not only in prayer, but also in the sexual act. This availability can be nurtured when husband and wife pray before they come together in the sexual act. This prayer is not degraded when it is done in view of the sexual act, nor is the sexual act diminished when a prayerful husband and wife come together.⁷⁶

Up to this point we have discussed how the conjugal act between Christian spouses is a reflection of, and participation in, Trinitarian, christological and ecclesial life. The gift of sexual relations was given to husband and wife so that they may more clearly love and know each other and God in their lives and experience the Creator's spiritual and physical fruitfulness. Having discussed the conjugal act, we now pass to what follows physically fertile sexual relations: pregnancy and birth.

⁷²NB XII, 114.

⁷³Cf. NB XII, 114.

⁷⁴Cf. NB XII, 43.

⁷⁵Cf. NB XII, 123-124. Here, Adrienne may be referring to the major part the mother plays in bringing the child to term, in nursing and in raising the child. The mother gives her body for nine months during pregnancy and continues to give herself afterwards in the nursing of the child. The father, gives himself as well, but does not give his body in the same way that the mother does. In this respect, his bodily giving over appears little in comparison to the woman's. But he must give himself over in other ways, mainly in working hard to provide shelter, food and clothing for his family and in supporting his wife and child spiritually and emotionally.

⁷⁶Cf. NB XII, 111.

8.3.5 Pregnancy and Birth

When the Christian spouses are gifted with physical fruitfulness, both spouses experience changes in themselves and in their relationship. For her part, the woman becomes increasingly aware of the physical changes occurring in her body. Undoubtedly, these affect her spiritual and emotional life. For his part, the man does not experience bodily changes, but he knows this is a time to care for the physical needs of the woman and to prepare for the new child. His spirit, too, is affected by his God-given fatherhood. To describe the time of pregnancy, Adrienne returns to the dual images of *action* and *contemplation*. While the sexual act is characterized as action, the time of pregnancy is characterized as contemplation. Through the woman, the man learns contemplation. Moreover, Adrienne explains that through the joining of his substance with the woman's, the man, in effect, lives in her. And yet the woman lives in the man because she becomes the gift that she makes to him. She no longer needs to *become* wife, she *is* wife.⁷⁷

Although the man does not experience pregnancy "first-hand" in the way the woman does, she initiates him into the more profound mysteries of pregnancy through the spiritual responsibility that she bears towards the developing infant. Thus, from the man who helped make her a mother, the woman demands a fatherly responsibility. He is not detached from his wife's pregnancy, but must be actively involved by giving his spiritual, emotional and material support. In the conjugal act, the woman revealed herself to the man. In pregnancy, she reveals not only herself, but also the child.⁷⁸

As the child begins to grow in the mother's womb, a certain mystery envelops the couple's union that Adrienne compares to the mystery of the Incarnation. With the Incarnation, the Son was entrusted for many years to the world. During the thirty or so years that Jesus lived out of the public eye, his mission of Redemption remain veiled just as the conjugal act is carried out in mystery and veiling. Only with pregnancy and birth is the physical fruit of the conjugal act made visible and public.⁷⁹

In service to his wife during pregnancy, the man lends his support in various ways. The woman may still bare herself in his presence. However, she does this no longer necessarily for him, but in service of the child. The husband wants to serve her by being affectionate and supportive through the preparation of her bath or lending support as his wife goes into labor.⁸⁰ The husband can consider how Joseph cared for the physical needs of Mary during her pregnancy, while the Father in heaven cultivated her spirit. He can contemplate how Mary maintained a reserve in relation to Joseph, a reserve that was

⁷⁷Cf. NB XII, 192. Cf. NB XII, 188: "Die passive Potenz der Frau zum Kind wird durch den Samen des Mannes aktiviert, wird aktive Potenz in Schwangerschaft und Geburt. In der Schwangerschaft liegt ein Gleichgewicht, da die aktive Potenz des Mannes sich in der Frau aktiviert. Bei der Geburt liegt alle Aktivität bei der Frau. Sie hat die Kraft und Fähigkeit, das Kind auszustoßen."

⁷⁸Cf. NB XII, 188-189. Cf. NB XII, 119. The mother's prayer takes on a particular form during this time. Adrienne notes also how the child in the womb, already prays through the bond with the mother: "Wenn eine Mutter für ihr Kind betet, das sie in ihrem Schoß spürt oder nach der Geburt betrachtet, von dem sie bereits eine lebedige Erfahrung hat, dann bindet sie die Wort, die sie Gott anvertraut: sie werden gleichsam zurückbezogen, um dem Kinde zu dienen; ja sie können Wurzeln des Gebetes im Kinde selber erzeugen; unmerklich und unbewußt betet das Kind durch seine Verbundenheit mit der Mutter mit."

⁷⁹Cf. NB XII, 118-119.

⁸⁰Cf. NB XII, 189.

expressed in her silence.⁸¹ Looking back, the husband remembers how he first took his wife into service to begin their marriage and initiate a family. Now, the wife takes the husband in service, while she herself is in service to the body of the child, and through this, she helps the man understand that he must serve both of them.⁸²

As the expectant mother nears the time of giving birth, it becomes clear that she and her husband must abstain from sexual relations. This occurs normally about six weeks before birth of the child. Through this abstention, the mere being-in-love of the husband and wife is transformed into a proven love that will be effectuated in later relations. Adrienne relates that through the pregnancy, it is as if the bodily love of the spouses is led out over itself to a type of high point to something more profoundly spiritual, which in turn allows itself to be realized bodily in the flesh and blood of the couple's child.⁸³ The spouses' abstention is a type of renunciation, an Advent and a fasting. According to Adrienne, the woman's libido remains more or less the same during pregnancy, while the man's is increased through renunciation of the sexual act. On their wedding night, the man introduced his bride into the conjugal act. Now, the expectant mother introduces her husband into renunciation. In the end, it is the child who makes them suspend sexual relations and who therefore grants them this new form of being one flesh. Later on, after the child's birth, husband and wife will belong in a new way to the "sacramental power of the child."⁸⁴

As she prepares to give birth, the woman once again experiences various spiritual and physical movements in herself. The expectant mother feels that although the man has filled her up bodily in the sexual act, still she remains reserved toward him because the child claims the whole space of her existence. The wife feels an unarticulated desire to expel her husband spiritually. Indeed, the first time she gives birth, the woman can feel bitterness towards her husband as if he has expected too much of her and that now she must bear this surfeit all by herself.⁸⁵ When contractions begin, the woman feels her bodiliness dominating over her spirit. It is as if she now mirrors the man who during the conjugal act seemed so physical.⁸⁶

When the wife goes to the hospital to give birth, she places everything in her husband's hands. But together, husband and wife must place themselves in God's hands in an action that it is fully contemplative. Much different from the conjugal act, when everything was so intimate and private, the woman now experiences an acute feeling of the lack of privacy of the hospital operating room. She feels humbled.⁸⁷

As she gives birth, the mother feels physically torn in two. Adrienne underlines that, as much as the mother can bear it, she should not be anaesthetized during parturition. The

⁸¹Cf. *NB XII*, 193.

⁸²Cf. *NB XII*, 189.

⁸³Cf. *NB XII*, 191-192. In abstention, husband and wife teach each other what it means to serve in marriage. Cf. *NB XII*, 203. The husband must imitate's Joseph's patience. As leader he must show that he can have control over himself. Cf. *NB XII*, 33.

⁸⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 195-197.

⁸⁵Cf. *NB XII*, 205-206.

⁸⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 213.

⁸⁷*NB XII*, 209-210.

mother, who gives birth without anesthesia, is more “awake” bodily, emotionally and spiritually for her child than the mother who is anaesthetized. Therefore, the “awake” mother can be fully present to her child during the very important first moments of the newborn’s life outside the womb.⁸⁸ As the labor pains grow increasingly painful, the mother experiences in them something of her husband’s potency during the conjugal act. During the conjugal act, the husband was in full power of his excitement and potency; the woman sensed the strength of his excitement more than she experienced it. Now she experiences the man’s potency first hand in her own body. Adrienne remarks that at this point, the woman is very close to Adam and Eve, whereby Eve is never so much ‘rib’ as in this moment.⁸⁹

8.3.6 The Virgin Mary and the Birth, Nourishing and Circumcision of Jesus

A number of meditations on the birth, nourishing and circumcision of Jesus make up the last part of *Theologie der Geschlechter*. As is often the case, Adrienne perceives christological and ecclesial overtones in each episode. Regarding the labor pains that arise during parturition, Adrienne emphasizes that Mary not only experienced physical pain, but also a most profound, spiritual suffering. In this way, she participated in the future death of her Son on the Cross. For his part, as Jesus hung dying on the cross, he felt something of the abandonment that Mary feels during contractions and parturition⁹⁰ when she feels physically and spiritually removed from her child.⁹¹ To say that Mary did not suffer real birthing pains would be as if she were to say to her Son: “You will suffer, but not me.”⁹²

Therefore, Jesus’ and Mary’s suffering and virginity are indelibly and intimately connected:

The birth pangs of the Mother are connected to the suffering of the Son on the cross. By suffering, he gives birth; by giving birth, she suffers. Her sufferings are included in his. ‘The hour has come.’ He says this both for himself and for his Mother. Just as his approaching hour and the hour of the Mother are one, so too the hour in him and the hour in the Church form a unity: the Church experiences her coming hour as birth of the Lord,

⁸⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 218-219.

⁸⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 212. Cf. *NB XII*, 224-225: “Im Prozeß der Geburt gibt es einen Festen Haken, woran die Frau sich halten kann: ihre Liebe zu ihrem Gatten. Im Blick auf ihn kann sie sich zusammennehmen und es durchstehen. [...] Die Selbstbeherrschung der Frau bei der Geburt ist ein Gegenbild zur Selbstbeherrschung des Mannes während der Schwangerschaft.”

⁹⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 213. Here, Adrienne notes that Mary in her own way is abandoned by the Father: “In ihren Wehen ist sie auf ihre Weise vom Vater verlassen.” Cf. *NB XII*, 71. “Auch die Einsamkeit der Frau während der Schwangerschaft gehört zur Sammlung des Ein-Fleisch-Seins. In der Geburt wird neues Leben selbständig, aber indem es aus einem Einheitsleben stammt. Der Sohn ist auch in der Einsamkeit des Kreuzes eins mit dem Vater und dem Geist.” Although, Adrienne might speak of Mary’s experience of childbirth in particular, it is clear that all women can experience childbirth *in* Mary. Mary’s experience of childbirth lends significance to all women’s experience of childbirth.

⁹¹Cf. *NB XII*, 224: “Die Mutter ist nie entfernter vom Kind, als während sie es gebiert.”

⁹²Cf. *NB XII*, 213. Cf. *NB XII*, 218. Adrienne describes Mary’s birth pangs in another way: it was like the pain experienced by two very good friends who must part from each other. The pain they feel is not purely spiritual, but also physical. Adrienne adds: “Auch Maria hat einen solchen Schmerz gekannt, da ihr Kind sich von ihr trennte; einen Schmerz, der eigentlich seine Mitte an dem Punkt hatte, wo die Empfängnis stattfand.”

insofar as she is Body and Bride of Christ; he experiences it as Passion. The Woman [Mary], who is gifted with a spiritual life, experiences in the physical child-bearing the spiritual suffering of the Man [Christ], whose excessive spiritual suffering must overflow into the physical suffering: on the Cross the physical suffering is so unbearably difficult only because of the spiritual suffering. Countless men have been crucified but no crucifixion is comparable to that of Christ, because no man has ever had the capacity even to begin to endure the kind of spiritual suffering that [Our Lord] took on. Likewise, no woman has suffered so much in giving birth as Mary did, because none was so immaculate as she. The virginal child-bearing of the Mother stands in essential relationship to the suffering of the virginal Son.⁹³

Mary's birth pangs, therefore, are a foreshadowing of the physical and spiritual suffering endured by the Lord on the Cross. Her physical pain foreshadows the physical pain Jesus will undergo during his scourging and crucifixion. Her spiritual suffering, which is rooted in her virginity, foreshadows Jesus' spiritual suffering of abandonment on the Cross. With the birth of their child, the woman and the man are intertwined in this mystery.⁹⁴ Above all, it is the giving over of the Lord on the Cross that gives meaning to the suffering of Mary, the woman and the man.

Adrienne sees a comparison between Jesus' birth and the consecration of the bread and wine during the Mass. She notes that both Jesus' birth and the consecration of the elements transpire by the power of the Holy Spirit. In both the Lord's birth and his Eucharist, something *becomes* what already in the beginning *was*. When Mary gives birth

⁹³NB XII, 217. "Zusammenhang zwischen den Geburtsschmerzen der Mutter und dem Leiden des Sohnes am Kreuz. Indem er leidet, gebiert er; indem sie gebiert, leidet sie. Ihre Leiden sind in den seinen eingeschlossen. 'Die Stunde ist gekommen': das sagt er für sich und für die Mutter. Wie die Stunde, die für ihn kommt, und die Stunde der Mutter eins sind, so bilden die Stunde in ihm und die Stunde in der Kirche eine Einheit: die Kirche erfährt ihre kommende Stunde als Geburt des Herrn--insofern sie Leib und Braut Christi ist--, er erfährt sie als Passion. Das Weib, das mit geistigem Leben ausgestattet ist, erfährt im leiblichen Gebären das geistige Leiden des Mannes, der von der Überschwere des geistigen Leidens her das leibliche miteinbezieht: am Kreuz ist das Leibliche nur im Hinblick auf das Geistige so unerträglich schwer. Ungezählte Menschen sind gekreuzigt worden, aber kein Kreuzestod ist dem Christi vergleichbar, weil kein anderer Mensch die Fähigkeit besaß, auch nur annähernd geistig so zu leiden wie er. So hat auch keine Frau unter der Geburt so gelitten wie Maria, weil keine so unberührt war wie sie. Die jungfräuliche Geburt steht in Beziehung zum Leiden des jungfräulichen des Sohnes."

⁹⁴It is apparent (and an understatement) to say that the woman's physical suffering at birth is more pronounced than that of the man, who has none. However, Adrienne seems to be saying that the physical pain that the child-bearing woman experiences is a powerful expression of the spiritual pain that the man bears. What would be the man's spiritual suffering? In a way, the man's spiritual suffering would be analogous to the suffering that Mary undergoes at the foot of the Cross. Mary strongly desires that her Son not suffer and yet she knows it is necessary. The man's suffering can be likened to that of a man who must remain in a room adjacent to another room where his beloved friend is being persecuted. The man longs to take his friend's place, but he also knows that his friend's suffering is necessary. Cf. also NB XII, 205-206. With regards to the woman's spiritual suffering, Adrienne characterizes this as a feeling of abandonment and a desire to "expel" her husband spiritually, as we saw above. Cf. Pa, 102-103. We also saw in *Passion von Imen* that the woman's physical pain is encompassed in the love for her husband and child.

to Jesus, there is a passage from the bodily Child inside of her to the bodily Child outside of her. With the consecration of the bread and wine, there is the initial Christian experience (the unity of faith as reality within the believers) and the reality of the resurrected Christ in heaven. Yet, Body and Blood are there on the altar.⁹⁵

After Jesus' birth, Mary cares for him just as any other mother would care for her child. But this Child is God and she is Virgin. In all her experiences, Mary is brought closer to the Father through the Son, even though she does not see the Father as the Son does. That is, she sees the Father not with her eyes, but through the Son. Indeed, she embraces the Son with her whole being, as any mother does her child. And in the demand of the Child for her, she recognizes the demand of the Father. When she brings the Son to her breast for the first time to feed him, she knows that she is giving her substance to God. Mary does not merely give her bodily milk to the bodily Child, but she responds to a divine demand with her whole being.⁹⁶

Contemplating the Child Jesus as he is fed by the Virgin Mary, Adrienne gives a meditation on "milk and blood." She notes that the "holy liquids" [*heilige Flüssigkeiten*] of milk and blood are already present in the first cell of the Church: Mary and the Child Jesus.⁹⁷ Adrienne elaborates:

Still the Mother's milk was there before the wound in the side [of Christ on the Cross], although the wound in the Son's side already existed predetermined in the Mother's milk. But this apparent contrast balances out for it reaches the Redemption and the Church from both points of view. Mary gave herself [*das Ihre*] to her Son and to the Church, and the Son gave himself [*das Seine*] to the Church, and in that respect to his Mother.⁹⁸

On the Cross, the Lord gives himself to the point of giving his last drop of blood. In fact, in a certain sense, the last drop of blood is anonymous giving over [*Hingabe*] to the Church: Jesus is already dead.⁹⁹

Adrienne sees Mary's milk and Christ's blood also in the light of the sacraments of Eucharist and confession when she writes: "Acqua lateris Christi, lava me. A milk washing that purifies and sanctifies while nourishing. The Child receives the Mother's milk only as nourishment. But considering that the Mother represents the Church, then her substance is again both a cleansing and nourishment. Holy Communion is the fulfillment not only of Baptism, but also of the washing away of sin in confession."¹⁰⁰ When a young mother nurses her child, she can be reminded of the image of Mary suckling the Child Jesus. Sensing a closeness with Mary and Jesus, she is drawn deeper into the mystery of marital

⁹⁵Cf. NB XII, 222. Adrienne adds: "Der Same der Lehre muß sich in der Kirche entwickeln, nicht nur durch Fortschritt der Erkenntnis, sondern durch jeden Akt der Transsubstantiation. Wären wir rein, wie Maria rein war, so würden wir in jeder Messe das Wort Gottes als Lehre empfangen und das Wort nicht nur auf dem Altar, sondern in uns selbst (als Kirche) Fleisch werden lassen."

⁹⁶Cf. NB XII, 242.

⁹⁷Cf. NB XII, 232.

⁹⁸NB XII, 231.

⁹⁹Cf. NB XII, 231.

¹⁰⁰NB XII, 231.

fruitfulness and the fruitfulness of the sacraments and the Church.

When a married woman experiences menstruation, the bleeding calls to mind her giving over and her fruitfulness. The Church's "bleeding" can also be a sign of fruitfulness. When martyrs give their blood, they contribute to the Blood the Lord shed of the Cross, thereby sanctifying the Church further. Adrienne underlines that because Mary was human in all her bodily experiences, she experienced menstrual bleeding like any woman.¹⁰¹ And even though Mary did not suffer martyrdom, she gave her body and her life in a way that surpasses the self-giving of all martyrs. For this reason, Catholics honor her and spouses can look to her as a model for self-giving of themselves in marriage.

Regarding the circumcision of the Child Jesus, Adrienne explains that it was clear to Mary that she both conceived and gave birth virginally.¹⁰² The virgin conception and virgin birth are not necessarily connected. It is as if they are next to each other in such a way that the one does not follow from the other. However, Mary knows that both realities will be made fruitful in God and transpired in view of the Son. Jesus is circumcised not simply because he belongs to a Jewish family and would be raised in Jewish traditions and customs, but more for the sake of his virginity. Adrienne elaborates:

Because the heavenly Father made use of the Holy Spirit so that [Mary] would conceive the Son virginally, and again to bring the Son virginally into the world, then the Son is surrounded by virginity. The whole service to the Son must be marked by it. And if the Son needs this service, then he himself, too, can only be virgin. For this reason, the rite of circumcision must also be carried out on him in order to underline that he is given over exclusively, body and soul, to God. [...] He gives over his manly existence for the Father's work of the world's Redemption.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Cf. *NB XII*, 234-235. Cf. *NB XII*, 234. Although Mary did experience menstrual bleeding, Adrienne holds that she gave birth to Jesus without shedding any blood: "Das Kind Marias, das nicht per vias naturales geboren wurde, kommt nicht blutig zur Welt. Die Bindung an Maria im Blut kommt erst nachher. [...] Sie kennt nur die Blutung innerer Bereitschaft zur Hingabe ('Regel')." Cf. *NB XII*, 238.: "Und auch das Nichtbluten der Mutter (aus den äußern Wegen) bei der Geburt wird irgendwie nachgeholt durch das Bluten des Kindes." Adrienne seems to be contradicting herself. On the one hand, she writes that Mary had labor pains like any other woman. On the other hand, at least in these citations, she notes that Mary did not bleed in parturition. Other places, Adrienne states that Mary bled during parturition.

¹⁰²Adrienne notes that Mary gave birth virginally, but also, as we saw above, she had birth pangs. This is either a) a contradiction, or b) something that can be explained biologically, or c) something that is miraculous. Cf. *NB XII*, 220. Adrienne seems to affirm both "b" and "c," that is, that it was both miraculous and can be explained partially in a biological way: "Maria hat ihr 'Gefäß,' ihre Gebärmutter, dem Geist zur Verfügung gestellt, währenddem die Geburtswege (wozu schon das Orificium externum gehört) jungfräulich, intakt geblieben sind. Und zwar nicht nur bei der Empfängnis, sondern auch bei der Geburt. Ihr Tragen des Kindes macht halt am Orificium externum des Collums. Bei der Geburt weitet sich der Hals bis zur Breite der Gebärmutter und der Scheide (die oben etwa viermal so breit ist wie unten beim Ausgang). Aber der äußere Muttermund bleibt geschlossen (bei einer Jungfrau, die nie geboren ist, ist die äußere Öffnung des Gebärmutter ungefähr ein Nadelkopf groß). Von der Scheide aus gesehen ist während der Schwangerschaft der Zapfen des Halses vergrößert, weil durchblutet, das Collum ist 'verstrichen.' Normal beginnt die Öffnung sich zu weiten, um dem herausstretenden Kopf des Kindes Raum zu geben. Dies geschieht bei Maria nicht, es gibt keine Öffnung. Der Weg wird nicht benützt. Sie hat den Schmerzen bis zu diesem vollkommenen Verstrichen, bis das Gefäß sich vollkommen bereitgemacht hat. Dann hört es auf."

¹⁰³*NB XII*, 237-238.

Naked and helpless, Jesus is given over to be circumcised. He cries when he feels pain. When children experience something painful like circumcision, they do not understand why they are in pain. Even though the parents bring the child to be circumcised and are indirectly the ones responsible for causing the pain, the child feels the love and thankfulness of the mother and father.¹⁰⁴

8.3.7 Advice for Engaged Persons

Throughout *Theologie der Geschlechter*, Adrienne gives some insightful advice on issues and situations that arise during the time of engagement. As always, her advice emerges from a theology of the sexes that ponders man and woman created as *imago Trinitatis* and *imago Christi*. Among those issues that concern persons preparing for marriage, whether “remotely, proximately or immediately,”¹⁰⁵ Adrienne addresses the following topics: *pre-marital virginity*, *honesty between engaged persons*, *the sexual drive* and *the engaged persons’ relationship to God*.

Regarding *pre-marital virginity*, Adrienne notes that the spiritual component of a married couple’s sexual relationship is threatened when the spouses have already experienced sexual intercourse before marriage. Often young people experiment sexually outside of marriage only in order to capture a certain physiological effect. When this occurs it is very difficult to raise sexual relations in marriage to a more spiritual level.¹⁰⁶ A man and woman preparing for marriage must consider the sexual elements in their relationship soberly, in effect, undergoing a type of “mutual test” [*gegenseitige Prüfung*]. If a difficult question arises that should be addressed, it should not be ignored or avoided. Adrienne warns: “Both persons must look each other in the eyes spiritually.”¹⁰⁷ Engaged couples who wait until marriage to enter into sexual relations have an advantage over those who do not wait. They know from experience that true love is more than erotic love. In many marriages, men have to abstain for brief or long periods of time. If the man learns to love his wife for herself and not to see her as some kind of object for satisfying his erotic needs, he will be able to handle abstention from sexual relations much more easily.¹⁰⁸

The *honesty between engaged persons* is lived in such a way that each is responsible for the other when it comes to remaining chaste for marriage and on the right path:

When the man, in his responsibility as the possible future husband, introduces and carries out this mutual test, the mutual entrusting to each other will be considered a mystery in a conscious analogy to the mystery of sacramental confession. Something of this mutual test will continue also after the marriage is entered into. The partners are entrusted to each other

¹⁰⁴Cf. NB XII, 239.

¹⁰⁵Cf. FC 66.

¹⁰⁶Cf. NB XII, 14. Cf. NB XII, 60. Adrienne further points out the dangers of pre-marital sexual relations or placing too much emphasis on the sexual in marriage: “Wer sich sofort auf das Sexuelle stürzt, ist eigentlich ein Kastrat: er beraubt sich selbst seiner höchsten Liebespotenz. Oder ist er wie ein Säufer, dem es nur auf den Rausch ankommt und dem es egal ist, ob der Wein kostbar oder gemein ist.”

¹⁰⁷NB XII, 56.

¹⁰⁸Cf. NB XII, 59.

by God; they carry responsibility for each other. They must warn each other if they see that one side is going astray. The greater the mutual openness remaining, the less will such a warning be necessary.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that preparation for marriage demands honesty, openness, mutual responsibility and the desire to entrust oneself to God.

Any person preparing for marriage must deal with *the sexual drive* courageously, as Adrienne explains:

Naturally, one cannot be engaged and want to solemnize his marriage and so totally ignore his drive, his own longing. He has to face courageously the sexual drive that yearns for mutual fulfillment, but each partner must renounce its fulfillment until marriage is entered into not only for oneself, but also for the other. The young woman takes joy in the man *as a whole*; she does not want to open the gift before the feast, just to see the single gifts. For the man, of course, the expectation is more precise. However, in joyful expectation, he too must make an effort at renunciation. He can do this only if he postpones his joy in the partner and gives more emphasis to the love for the 'Thou' than to his sexual desire.¹¹⁰

Because the whole body is expression of the whole soul, the relationship between them (body and soul) is falsified when a part of the bodily realm is broken off and confiscated.¹¹¹

Adrienne points out that *the engaged persons' relationship to God* must be lived as profoundly as possible, not mainly together, but individually, in a personal deepening of one's own relationship with God. Adrienne writes: "They ought to set up their bridal bed in the midst of the Church: the way leads from the spirit to the flesh and through the flesh back to the spirit. Only in this way can the flesh be a bearer of perfect joy."¹¹²

8.3.8 Counsel for Certain Situations and Ethical Issues That Arise in Marriage

In addition to the advice that Adrienne gives to engaged persons, she also considers certain situations and ethical issues that can arise in marriage. Mainly, she addresses the following topics: *the wedding night*, *egoistical restrictions* and *natural rhythms of fruitfulness*. On *the wedding night*, the woman's first experience of sexual intercourse can be quite traumatic. The more untouched she is, the more frightened she may feel. The man must be aware of his new bride's feelings by treating her gently and lovingly and overcoming his own haste for self-gratification. The woman can feel anxious for two reasons. First, she can fear the "brutality" of the act as such. She never expected it to be just so, even if she had imagined how it might be theoretically. Second, there is the anxiousness of the estrangement after the conjugal act has been consummated. Adrienne explains: "With the first conjugal act, the woman has experienced a tear in herself, but she has not known

¹⁰⁹NB XII, 57.

¹¹⁰NB XII, 58.

¹¹¹Cf. NB XII, 58.

¹¹²NB XII, 59.

the power of love. Barely one of ten women experience true gratification the first time."¹¹³ This is not because they are frigid, but because they are afraid. Moreover, the woman experiences these feelings not only on account of physiological reasons, but also on account of human reasons: she has not experienced "giving over" [*Hingabe*] enough. Thus, it is clear that the man must lead in the conjugal act in such a way that he does not leave the woman "behind" and that she does not feel like some kind of an object.¹¹⁴

On the wedding night, Adrienne observes that it is not always necessary to have sexual relations. Indeed, the wedding celebration can be an obstacle to being able to have loving sexual relations the first night. For example, the husband may have drunk too much alcohol. Moreover, often both spouses feel tired after all the excitement of the day. Adrienne elaborates:

The wedding ceremony is long over, the celebration lasted the whole day and by evening the man is unleashed. And in this way, the most beautiful thing becomes desecrated. Husbands often believe they must definitely have sexual intercourse the first night or else their wife might despise them. But they do not think in this way. Perhaps it would be enough if the husband would just cuddle up with her. So much depends on the first night!¹¹⁵

Above all, the first night together should be a time to give thanks to God for the gift of the sacrament of matrimony that the bridegroom and bride received that day. Should they have sexual intercourse, they will give themselves to each other cognizant of the graces they have received that day and of the mysteries that they have now entered into: the mysteries of Christ, the Church and the Holy Trinity.

In a number of places, Adrienne warns against *egoistical restrictions* [*egoistischen Restriktion*] to fruitful conjugal love. When spouses put up obstacles to complete physical and spiritual fulfillment of their sexual love, they are robbing themselves of the infinite graces that are bestowed upon chaste sexual love.¹¹⁶ Above all, whether a child is conceived or not does not depend on one's will. Only God gives spouses spiritual and physical fruitfulness. Yet, God has given spouses so much freedom that they can decide to comport

¹¹³NB XII, 83. Cf. NB XII, 86. Adrienne describes the fluctuating feelings a new bride can have after the first time: "Beim Gefühl des Verlassenseins nach dem ersten Akt ist die Reaktion der Frau nicht selten: ich hoffe, daß ich kein Kind bekomme. Die Empfindung der Einsamkeit kann so stark sein, daß sie am liebsten dort wieder anknüpfen würde, wo sie noch Jungfrau war. Die Bindung an ein Kind ist unerwünscht. Wenn es dann nach einigen Tagen in Ordnung kommt, dann eine neue Frage: bin ich fähig, aufzunehmen? Diese Angst wird physiologisch gesteigert vor der Regel. Vor der ersten Regel in der Ehe ist ihr Verlangen nach dem Kind groß." Cf. NB XII, 87-88. She will try to be more "spirit" than "body": "Die Braut malt sich den Akt nicht aus. Sie kennt den Bräutigam ja noch nicht. Wenn es recht zugeht, wird sie mehr seelisch als leiblich versuchen, die zu sein, die er wünscht. Wäre sie vor der Hochzeitsnacht in der Seele sündig und am Leib befleckt, so sollte sie, falls sie nur für das eine Zeit hätte, lieber beichten als baden." Cf. also NB XII, 29. 88-92.

¹¹⁴Cf. NB XII, 83-84.

¹¹⁵NB XII, 84.

¹¹⁶Cf. NB XII, 104: "Wenn zwei in der Sünde oder wenigstens in einer egoistischen Restriktion sich lieben, bleiben eine Menge Schranken der Begierlichkeit bestehen, die ihrer Liebe den Unendlichkeitscharakter rauben."

themselves in a sterile way.¹¹⁷

Fruitful sexual intercourse, therefore, is ultimately a form of obedience to God. Adrienne explains:

In the moment of being 'too late,' when the seed can no longer be held back, the conjugal act is carried out for the man, even if he has not yet physically discharged the seed. The man becomes 'contemplative;' contemplation is immanent to the act. Also in the Incarnation of the Son there is a unity between letting loose [*Loslassen*] and allowing to be let loose [*Losgelassenwerden*]. The bridge to contemplation is obedience. Disobedience, in this case, for example, would be pulling back at the last moment, *coitus interruptus*. This is the refusal of contemplation that is not up to the man. The seed is to be given over to the woman and to God.¹¹⁸

Dictated in late 1946 and early 1947, the meditations in *Theologie der Geschlechter* would not have included a more modern term such as "contraception." Nonetheless, we can see that one form of "contraception" that some spouses practiced at the time was *coitus interruptus*.¹¹⁹ Whether the conjugal act is interrupted or whether it is thwarted by means of a pill, prophylactic or other devices, the result is the same: disobedience and physical and spiritual sterility.

Thus, Adrienne warns against frustration of the conjugal act on the one hand, but she also underlines that physical fruitfulness cannot simply be achieved by the spouses alone. Ultimately, God is the author of all human life:

In his giving over, the man accepts the loss, the death of his seed. For the man, this loss would inevitably be death, were the wife not to take the seed in so that he could rise again. But it would be pure, ludicrous presumption if she were to assert that she were capable of bringing about this resurrection. A child originates only from God. It is God who assumes responsibility for both of the elements, the egg and the seed, and with a

¹¹⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 130-131. With this insight, Adrienne alludes to the sterility of those acts that impede conception. However, her observations can also be seen as an admonishment for those acts that may appear fruitful on the surface, but in effect are not. An example of this would be artificial insemination that removes the conjugal act from the sanctuary of the bedroom and places it in the sterile environment of the laboratory.

¹¹⁸*NB XII*, 73. Cf. *NB XII*, 58-59: "Er hat kein Verfügungsrecht über sein Potenz, deren Maß liegt schließlich in der Frau. Ihr muß er sie anvertrauen und darf sich nicht als ein Fertiges, Abgeschlossenes an sie herantragen wollen. Gott schuf den Menschen als Mann und Weib: auf diesem Und liegt großes Gewicht." Cf. *NB XII*, 67: "Er wird darin von seinem eigenen Schicksal getrennt, denn sein Same ist sein Schicksal: Leben von seinem Leben, und es bedeutet Tod, wenn nicht das hingegebene Weib ihn mitsamt seinem Schicksal aufnehmen würde." Cf. *NB XII*, 107. Here, Adrienne observes how the natural, biological maturing of the man's seed and the maturing of the fertilized egg in the woman are nature's way of indicating what it means to give oneself over into fruitfulness. Masturbation and abortion are counter to fruitful maturation: "Der Same reift, solange er im Mann ist, und es gibt einen Prozeß der Geduld des Mannes. Schenkt er seine Substanz der Frau, dann reift die Frau an der Substanz des Mannes: Reifen des Mannes wie der Frau sind an diese Substanz gebunden. Und was heißt reifen? Eigentlich: sich von sich selbst wegbegeben in die Fruchtbarkeit hinein. Und damit: sich von der Sünde webegeben. Wenn wir nicht reifen lassen, sind wir Sünder: Onanie des Mannes, Abtreibung der Frucht in der Frau." Cf. also *NB XII*, 24. 157.

¹¹⁹Cf. Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, Encyclical on Christian Marriage, AAS 559, 1930. Pius XI admonishes those who "frustrate the marriage act."

'little bit of clay' from the man and woman, creates the child. The co-creation [*Mit-Erschaffen*] of the parents does not go beyond giving an element of themselves [*das Ihrige*] over to be clay and dust for the hand of God. Hence, the attitude of the giving over [or self-offering/sacrifice: *Hingabe*] of both in the conjugal act. And both appear ludicrous when they act as if the law of begetting had been invented by them, as if it were their own mystery, as if they were obeying their own law.¹²⁰

Although "*in vitro* fertilization" and other forms of "artificial procreation" were not practiced at the time that Adrienne dictated these words, we can see that her words were prophetic. If spouses err by frustrating the conjugal act in order not have children, they also err by trying to "play God" in asserting that they alone are capable of bringing a child into the world.

Regarding the *natural rhythms of fruitfulness* of the spouses, Adrienne speaks with clarity and decisiveness:

The woman has her period. The man, too, has certain rhythms in his fruitfulness and libido. To a great extent, these are subjectively conditioned or individually distinguished and determined by habits. As his "rule," the man should make no rule for the woman. Even less should both spouses regulate their sexual activity by any underlying physiological laws besides that of love.¹²¹ Apart from the days when the woman is not feeling well, everything should remain in the balance, precisely for the woman. Otherwise, very soon the 'justice' over love wins over. To a great extent, this demands from the woman an obvious capacity of renunciation: often she would like more, often less. If she is obedient and the entire human [*gesamtmenschliche*] love is in order, then peace comes to their mutual relationship.¹²²

Reading Adrienne's words here, one might conclude that she would be opposed to faithful spouses practicing *natural family planning*. However, it would be a mistake to use her words, that were uttered over fifty years ago, to make a judgement about something that is endorsed by the Church today.¹²³ The important point is to recall her fundamental advice---whether one refers to the *rhythm method* or to *natural family planning*---love is to be the underlying "law" in marital relations. And true love in marriage is always a total giving of each other in service to God. In this way, it is God who determines when a child is to be born to the spouses.

Adrienne also warns against spouses who decide to only have one child. When spouses restrict their fruitfulness after having one child, it becomes a "law" that they do not

¹²⁰NB XII, 138.

¹²¹"Underlying physiological laws" probably refers to the "rhythm method" that would have been known and, to some extent, practiced at the time.

¹²²NB XII, 47.

¹²³Cf. FC, 32: "When instead by recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as 'ministers' of God's plan and they 'benefit from' their sexuality according to the original dynamism of 'total' self-giving, without manipulation or alteration."

have any more. The spiritual component of their relationship disappears. As flesh of their flesh, not spirit of their spirit, the child even becomes an “animal” without a spirit. The conjugal act becomes purely egotistical. One-child families can even be worse than childless marriages.¹²⁴

However, through no fault of their own, some couples can have only one child or none at all. Adrienne explains that this situation must be understood in a different light than that of the previous paragraph:

It is a completely different situation when it is physically or morally impossible to have more children. Then the spiritual element in sexual intercourse must be emphasized. And this will be easier if the spiritual element is allowed to develop in the conjugal act from the beginning. [...]

In a Christian way, the marriage bond can become so strong, like a prayer that is determined by God, and in certain peripheral cases it can become a Joseph-marriage.¹²⁵

In every marriage, the spiritual fruitfulness of the conjugal act should be of primary importance; bodily fruitfulness is always an added gift. Therefore, if the spiritual fruitfulness of marriage is fostered from the beginning, a childless couple will find consolation and joy in the Lord.¹²⁶

8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered marriage themes in *Erde und Himmel* and *Theologie der Geschlechter*. Along with Adrienne, we have examined marriage in the light of theological anthropology, Trinitarian, sacramental, spiritual, moral and pastoral theology, ecclesiology and Mariology. Indeed, for Adrienne, all the theological disciplines come together. By returning repeatedly to parallels between the Trinity and the spouses, between the Christ-Church and man-woman unions, and between the Mary-Joseph and husband-wife unions, Adrienne succeeds in portraying marriage in its incarnational and spiritual qualities. At the same time, she breaks through the chains that the Church has used to bind down sexuality in past centuries. Adrienne describes the complexities of the conjugal relationship in a straightforward, concrete and sober way that is refreshing and profoundly insightful. Only by integrating sexuality into a Trinitarian, christological and ecclesial understanding, can the Christian couple appreciate the full significance of their spiritual and physical fruitfulness. We will deepen our understanding of the implications of Adrienne's contributions in Part IV.

¹²⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 245.

¹²⁵*NB XII*, 245-246.

¹²⁶Cf. *FC*, 14: “It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children.”

Part IV: The Spiritual Theology of Marriage according to Adrienne von Speyr

After presenting Adrienne von Speyr's insights on marriage within the context of a number of key writings, we are now in a position to gather these insights together in order to bring into focus her theology of marriage as a whole. It is true that Adrienne's work does not lend itself easily to systematic division. Often dogmatic and spiritual theology blend together in her works and more "pastoral" insights are sprinkled throughout. Moreover, she often uses alternative terminology in the place of traditional theological terms. Thus, instead of writing of *grace*, *indissolubility* and *covenant*, Adrienne often writes of *fruitfulness*, *irrevocability* and *bond*. Nonetheless, the division of themes that we adopt here, although traditional, gathers together her main contributions in an organic fashion such that the more "dogmatic" insights lend a strong foundation for the "spiritual" theology.

Part IV includes Chapters 9 and 10. In each chapter, we will view marriage from a different standpoint. In *Chapter 9*, the anthropological and dogmatic underpinnings of marriage will be considered. Thus, the main themes of marriage in the Old and New Covenant will be reviewed and more profoundly explored. In *Chapter 10*, conjugal and familial spirituality will be discussed. Here, the duties of marriage and the prayer and sacramental life of the spouses will be brought into closer consideration. In both chapters, a number of Adrienne's more pastoral insights will be illuminated. Thus, the key themes of mixed marriage, natural family planning, contraception and education on sexual matters will be treated.

Having gathered the pieces of the puzzle in Parts II and III, in Part IV we will place them together into a coherent, integral picture. In piecing together the principal elements of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage, we will be in a good position to critique her thought and to "dialogue" with other theologians. Some of Adrienne's insights that may have seemed somewhat unclear in earlier treatment will be better illuminated. Other insights that are quite novel and unique will be highlighted. Still others will need to be complemented and supplemented by contributions from other theologians. Because the pieces of the puzzle that have already been gathered will now be pieced together, there will be some repetition of themes from Chapters 2 through 8. However, because the main themes have already been presented within the context of Adrienne's various writings on marriage, in this chapter, they will be treated summarily in order to leave room for additional insights that spring forth from them. By elaborating on the key insights of Adrienne's theology of marriage in *Part IV*, we will be in a position to identify the main characteristics of her writings on marriage in the *General Conclusion*.

Chapter Nine: The Anthropological and Dogmatic Foundations of Christian Marriage

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, Adrienne von Speyr's contributions in the realm of the dogmatic and anthropological foundations of the sacrament of marriage will be considered. Tracing chronologically the unfolding of the sacrament of matrimony from the Creation of man and woman, to the fall into sin, to the Incarnation of Christ, to the generation of the Church and finally to the institution of the marriage sacrament, the study will proceed in three steps corresponding to the three main sections comprising *Chapter Nine*. First, in *section 9.2*, we will deepen our understanding of Adrienne's insights into *the paradisal origins of marriage*. Second, in *section 9.3*, we will examine more closely *marriage in the life of the Lord*. Third, in *section 9.4*, we will consider carefully *marriage in the life of the Church*. Throughout our study, we will delve deeper into many central themes of marriage as they arise in Adrienne's works: the original Creation and state of man and woman, the fall into sin, sanctification of marriage by Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the institution of the sacrament of marriage at the Cross, marital consent, indissolubility, the sacramental covenant, the sacramentality and fruitfulness of marriage, the theological foundations of headship and subjection and the Christian states of life.

9.2 Creation, Paradise and Fall: The Paradisal State and the Origin of Marriage

It is only fitting that any study on marriage begin with the Creation of man and woman in Paradise, since our Lord himself referred to the paradisal roots of marriage.¹ Furthermore, the theme of the paradisal roots of man has a prominent place in the writings of Adrienne von Speyr. Again and again she contemplates God's original intention and man's primordial nature. For example, Adrienne sees the original innocence and ready openness of man before God in the person of Mary and in the person who has a genuine confessional attitude. As indicated in *Chapter 1*, Mary and sacramental confession are two fundamental themes in Adrienne's writings.

Moreover, although the original God-man-woman relationship was altered forever with sin, it is important to consider marriage's paradisal roots since its fundamental properties, such as gender, unity, polarity, bodiliness, spiritualness and fruitfulness, bear the mark of paradisal life in some way. In this section, we will examine more closely how

¹Cf. *Mk* 10, 6-9: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.' So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." These words of the Lord combine both *Gn* 1, 27 and 2, 24. He refers back to Paradise when teaching the new meaning of marriage, that is, the man-woman unity founded in him. However, as Adrienne observes (and as will be examined shortly), marriage is directed towards Christ already in Paradise. Pope John Paul II echoes this. Cf. John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò, catechesi sull'amore umano* (Vatican City: Città Nuova Editrice, 1992³), 375: "L'istituzione del matrimonio, secondo le parole della Genesi 2, 24, esprime non soltanto l'inizio della fondamentale comunità umana che, mediante la forza 'procreatrice' che le è propria ('siate fecondi e moltiplicatevi': *Gn* 1, 28), serve a continuare l'opera della creazione, ma essa nello stesso tempo *esprime l'iniziativa salvifica del Creatore*, corrispondente alla eterna elezione dell'uomo, di cui parla la Lettera agli Efesini."

Adrienne understands the original state of these fundamental, constitutive elements of the man-woman relationship, as well as, how they were altered by sin. Insights of John Paul II and of Hans Urs von Balthasar pertaining to Adrienne's understanding of paradisaal man and woman will also be considered.

9.2.1 Creation

In her meditations on the creation accounts of *Genesis* 1 and 2, Adrienne explains that God is the supreme Creator and protector of all fruitfulness.² In creating the world, God gave his very being that is fruitfulness itself. At the same time, he retained power over it. Thus, all plants, animals, men and women drew their fruitfulness from God. Consequently, they were fruitful to the extent that they acknowledged God's authority over their fecundity. Plants and animals grew and lived within an innate cycle of fertility. In this paradisaal world, their "acknowledgment" of their God-given fruitfulness took on the form of a purely natural and instinctual response. Adam and Eve grew and lived also, but they acknowledged God's fruitfulness not only in a natural way, but also in their God-given supernatural capacity. In other words, Adam and Eve were fruitful in both body and spirit.

Describing paradisaal spiritual fruitfulness, Adrienne writes that original man and woman were "drawn into trinitarian prayer."³ To explicate original man's experience of participation in God's prayer, Adrienne speaks in the first person singular from the point of view of Adam. In a remarkable passage, she writes that Adam is profoundly cognizant of the gift he has been given. He gives thanks to God for the gift of knowing the fulfillment of his triune will and he prays that he can remain united with him. Yet, he is aware that God has placed him "in the world and not in heaven" and that he is given the freedom to carry out his God-given task in the world.⁴ Adrienne writes that Adam and Eve's participation

²Cf. *Sc.*, 41-42: "An der Pflanze lässt sich der Prozeß der Fruchtbarkeit betrachten, berechnen und beeinflussen. Und doch weiß der Mensch dabei, daß nicht er die Fruchtbarkeit der Pflanze bewirkt, sondern daß Gott sie am Anfang den Pflanzen geschenkt hat. [...] Indem Gott sie den Pflanzen gibt, den Steinen nicht gibt, zeigt er, daß er alle Fruchtbarkeit in seine Verwaltung behält." Two observations on original man are of import here. First, it is important to see that the first man and woman come to the awareness of their own fruitfulness by observing the world around them. Through their own senses, through their bodies, they see that they are different. God's creation leads them to a more profound awareness of themselves. As we will see in a following section, John Paul II would say that through his experience of his body, man becomes aware of his personhood. Although, Adrienne does not employ personalistic terminology, she expresses an idea similar to the Holy Father's. Second, that God is the supreme Creator and protector of all fruitfulness has important implications for married men and women, indeed, for all men and women. Because physical fruitfulness is a gift from God it is to be received as a gift. It is not something that one has a right to or that one should attempt to thwart in any way. When the one who loves (in this case, the "tremendous Lover" who is God) offers an authentic gift to the beloved, the beloved receives the gift with a spirit of thanksgiving and joy. The gift reminds the beloved of the love that the giver has for him; it reminds one of the Lover Himself. Thus, when the gift of bodily fruitfulness is misused either by attempts to thwart it (i.e. contraception, voluntary sterility) or to seize it (i.e. *in vitro* fertilization), one's perception of the gift and of the loving Giver is altered. The gift is no longer seen as an expression of the Giver, but rather as one's own possession that one has a right to manipulate in whichever way one pleases. The link between Giver and gift becomes severed. The theme of the manipulation of physical fruitfulness will be discussed in more detail in subsection 10.2.5.

³Cf. *Sc.*, 62: "Gottes Absicht, als er die Menschen als Mann und Weib schuf und sie segnete, war es, sie in dieses trinitarische Gebet einzubeziehen."

⁴Cf. *Sc.*, 68-71.

in trinitarian prayer is a continual source of renewal for their union. Every encounter brings with it “new and unexpected fulfillment.”⁵

From God’s point of view, Adrienne notes that the eternal prayer-dialogue between the divine Persons is centered on the possibility of the Cross.⁶ Already from the beginning, the Son stands ready to redeem the world. Indeed, in describing how the whole world is laid onto the Son as if it were the “last thought of God” as he completed his task of Creation,⁷ Adrienne sketches a picture of the great burden that God has placed on himself. He has created the world and it is good. But he also gave his children freedom to destroy that which has been bestowed upon them. Describing God in very human terms, Adrienne writes that the Son accompanies Adam with compassionate concern. And when the first man sins, the Son already endures a human experience vicariously in the sin and person of Adam.⁸

Because the Son is not yet incarnate, the world does not yet live directly and immediately [*unmittelbar*] from his life and out of his Spirit. Adrienne explains: “With the Incarnation and Redemption of the world, the Son gives to the world the Spirit of the Father and his own spirit. In other words, the Father will beget us anew in his Spirit as his sons. In this way, the world can return to the Father as created world in the Holy Spirit participating in the begetting of the Son.”⁹ Adrienne’s insight that the world participates in the begetting of the eternal Son effectively illustrates how strong is God’s desire that all men participate intimately and profoundly in his trinitarian life. In the relationship between spouses,

⁵W, 239-240. [262-263].

⁶Cf. Sc, 31: “Bevor noch ein Mensch ist, der beten und seine Zweckbestimmung erfüllen kann, ist schon ein Platz für das künftige Gebet ausgespart. Er liegt im gegenseitigen Gespräch und in der gegenseitigen Anbetung von Gott Vater und Sohn im Heiligen Geist, und dieses Gespräch dreht sich bei der Welterschaffung von vornherein um das Kreuz.”

⁷Cf. Sc, 11-12: “Bei der Erschaffung der Welt ist der vom göttlichen Vater gezeugte Sohn in der Welt erst so verwirklicht wie das Kunstwerk: der Sohn ist gleichsam als das Geplante, als der letzte Gedanke Gottes in der Welt vorhanden, und die ganze Welt ist auf ihn hin angelegt.” Cf. Angelo Scola, “Spiritualità coniugale nel contesto culturale contemporaneo,” in AA.VV., *Cristo Sposo della Chiesa Sposo, sorgente e modello della spiritualità coniugale e familiare* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1997), ed. Renzo Bonetti, 44-45. Scola elaborates on the mystery of the eternal Christ who is present in Creation: “Gesù Cristo, dunque, immagine visibile del Dio invisibile, nella sua missione, compie il disegno originario del Padre sulla creazione, e perciò era appunto già presente e operante nel ‘principio;’ nella sua missione si compie infallibilmente l’alleanza tra Dio e l’uomo.” Cf. A. Scola, *Questioni di Antropologia teologica* (Milano: Edizioni Ares, 1996), 21: “Ecco perché realmente Cristo Gesù morto e risorto è il punto di riferimento originario, è l’ ‘Alfa’ in cui ogni uomo e il mondo sono stati fatti. Senza questo punto di riferimento i misteri stessi della vita di Gesù, la sua stessa missione, non sarebbero comprensibili. La creazione è parte dell’opera dell’Incarnazione salvifica.”

⁸Cf. Sc, 38: “Im Augenblick, da die Sünde hervortritt, Konfrontation von Sünde und Kreuz. In diesem Augenblick hat der Sohn schon seine menschliche Erfahrung: Nicht in sich selbst, sondern in Adam.”

⁹Sc, 12: “Wenn der Sohn zur Erlösung der Welt Mensch werden wird, wird er der Welt den Geist des Vaters und seinen Geist schenken, mit andern Worten: der Vater wird uns in diesem Geist als seine Söhne neu zeugen, und so kann die Welt zum Vater zurückkehren, als geschaffene Welt in Heiligen Geist an der Zeugung des Sohnes teilnehmend.” When Adrienne writes of the “Spirit of the Father” [*Geist des Vaters*] and the Son’s “own spirit” [*seinen eigenen Geist*], she does not mean to say that there are two Holy Spirits. It is probable that here Adrienne understands Christ’s human “spirit” (with a small “s”) to be the same as his “will.” In this way she would simply be affirming the Catholic understanding that the incarnate Son had both a divine and human will. Cf. DS 510. The “Spirit of the Father” would then be the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. And the Son’s “own spirit” would be understood as Christ’s human will.

procreation is brought about through the conjugal act that is an expression of the immense intimacy shared by husband and wife. Carried out in the privacy of the marriage bed, the conjugal act is enshrouded by mysteries that image those of the trinitarian God. However, if the conjugal act is an image, albeit a distant one, of begetting in God, then we are given an insight into how much God wants us to be a part of his divine life. He desires so much that we live in him that he invites us into the most intimate act of his being: the begetting of the Son in the Holy Spirit.

9.2.2 The Unity of Man and Woman in Paradise

In a number of places, Adrienne speaks of the *unity between man and woman* in Paradise. She notes that before paradisaic man and woman could become one, they had to first know the prior tension of “being two” [*Zweisein*].¹⁰ This “being two,” however, is not a sterile egocentrism; each person is inherently (naturally and supernaturally) inclined towards the other. In Adrienne’s understanding of paradisaic man’s inherent inclination towards the other, one notes similarities with John Paul II’s writings on the *nuptial meaning of the body*. Indeed, a number of similarities arise in the visions of Adrienne von Speyr and the Holy Father. For this reason, we will dialogue with John Paul II in section 9.2.3 which follows this one.

Adrienne observes that sexual duality [*Zweigeschlechtlichkeit*] attests to a fundamental structure that is inherent in man, but also in God. Duality is such an integral part of God’s existence, that the Son produces this duality when he is incarnated, God and man, into the world and creates, from his own side, the Church as his Bride.¹¹ Sexual duality in man is not only a bodily reality, but also a spiritual one. Therefore, one’s masculinity or femininity penetrates to the very core of one’s being.¹² Moreover, since the sexual duality of man is the “image and likeness” of duality in God,¹³ manifested in Christ’s human and

¹⁰Cf. *Ma*, 445: “Ein bloßes Einsein, eine Einsamkeit im Gegensatz zu Zweisein, ist Sterilität. Allein kann man nichts zeugen, nichts gebären. Die Einheit muß die vorherige Spannung des Zweiseins gekannt haben und von dieser Spannung her, im Gehorsam an das Fruchtbarkeitsgebot Gottes, zur Einheit geworden sein.”

¹¹Cf. *Ma*, 444-445: “In dieser Zweigeschlechtlichkeit des Menschen liegt eine Struktur, die nicht nur die natürliche Welt kennzeichnet, sondern auch die übernatürliche, die Kirche mit einbezieht, eine Struktur, die von Anfang an nicht nur angedeutet, sondern vorhanden war, in ihrer Geschichte manchen Schwankungen unterlag, im wesentlichen aber konstant blieb. Sie wissen: als der Sohn Gottes Mensch wurde, hat er dieses Zweisein des Menschen dadurch wieder hergestellt, daß er die Kirche als seine Braut schuf.”

¹²The differences in masculinity and femininity are more than merely physical or cultural. Studies show that there are fundamental differences in the psychological, emotional and spiritual constitution of men and women. Cf. Roger Muchielli, *Psicologia della vita coniugale, Problemi e indicazioni terapeutiche* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1993) Edited with a Preface by Gianfrancesco Zuanazzi. Translated from the French (original title: *Psychologie de la vie conjugale*) by Angela Contessi, 21-47.

¹³Cf. *MD*, 6-7. Cf. A. Scola, *Il Mistero Nuziale, l’Uomo-Donna* (Roma: MURSIA, 1998), 43-61. Departing from *MD*, 6 and John Paul II’s contributions on the creation of man and woman in his *Wednesday Catechisms on Divine and Human Love* (which will be treated in the following section), Scola examines the theological question of human sexuality as *imago Dei* from a historical, exegetical and theological point of view. For the purposes of this section, his conclusions regarding the dogmatic questions are especially pertinent. From the biblical studies on the question, Scola outlines five underlying points (pp. 52-55): First, the *imago Dei* cannot be limited to man’s rational nature. Man is *imago Dei* body and soul. Second, created in and destined for Christ, man is by nature “covenantal.” Man is created to be in covenant with God. Third,

divine nature (the hypostatic union) from which he begets the Church, two more conclusions can be drawn. First, man and woman strive to unite themselves in marriage in imitation of Christ who is two-in-one in his very being. Second, Christ's dual nature and his union with the Church are both physical, as well as, spiritual realities. Therefore, spouses are inserted into the Christ-Church union (Eph 5, 21-33) not only in a spiritual way, but also in an authentically physical manner.

God made man to be two, but also one. In becoming one with each other, man and woman overcome solitude. Adrienne underscores that in opening oneself to the other [*Zueinandersein*], one realizes that one is not all alone.¹⁴ It is the presence of the "other" or the "thou" that draws man and woman to each other, but also that draws each into relationship with God.¹⁵ And the more perfectly the original man and woman gave themselves over to each other, the greater they were opened up to God. Indeed, their

man cannot be *imago Dei* by himself. He needs to be in relation with another. The man-woman relation best witnesses to this. Fourth, man's procreation (Gn 1, 28) is not merely functional. "Becoming one flesh" (Gn 2, 24) is understood most clearly when seen in the light of Gn 1, 28 and as man and woman's participation in the *imago Dei*. Fifth, the man-woman union is seen, especially by St. Paul (Eph), as part of the *imago Dei* inasmuch as it represents Christ, who in union with his Church, longs to fill the whole earth with his fullness (cf. Eph 1, 23). The Christ-Church union reveals, therefore, the mystery that remained hidden in creation for a long time.

From the Church fathers, Scola observes that they never considered sexuality a consequence of sin, but a distinctive sign of sin: "La sessualità infatti, nell'autentica concezione guidaico-cristiana, non è mai vista in un'ottica sessuofobica." (p. 57) Scola explains why the Cappadocian fathers held that man and woman were *imago Dei* only in the *mens*. ["Gregorio non intende però porre una differenza temporale parlando di creazione in due tempi, ma piuttosto una differenza ontologica. Si tratta di qualcosa che avviene nel dinamismo della prescienza di Dio più che nella realtà. Va anche detto, così stando le cose, più chiaramente per Origene, ma in ultima analisi anche per il Nissenio, l'*imago Dei* finiva per collocarsi nella parte più elevata dell'anima. È questa una tesi che sarà ripresa ed ampliata dalla tradizione agostiniana-tomista, per la quale l'*imago* risiede nel *mens*." (pp. 56-57)] They concluded *imago Dei* resided only in the *mens*, for two reasons. One, they sustained that there was virginal, bodily fecundity in Paradise. Two, they saw how sexuality is tied to death. Thus, they concluded that sexuality could not be compatible with immortality. Finally, Scola shows how von Balthasar underlines that sexual difference is part of the *imago Dei* precisely inasmuch as it is ordered to procreation. (Von Balthasar's understanding, that departs from Adrienne's, will be examined in more detail in subsection 9.2.5.) Scola concludes with Balthasar's explication (which is cited in 9.2.5) how the difference in sexes also attests to God's original design that man and woman be created in the image of the Christ-Church union. With this, he returns to Adrienne's observation (noted above) that God creates man from his duality that is revealed in Christ.

¹⁴Cf. Sc, 53: "Im Menschen ist die Einsamkeit überwunden. Er braucht den andern, um seine eigene Bestimmung zu erfüllen. Im Zueinandersein erfährt der Mensch, daß er nicht ausgesetzt ist: das Ich vertraut dem Du, ohne es noch zu kennen." Cf. also: St, 73. [73-74]. When Adrienne speaks of paradisaal man overcoming solitude, John Paul's contributions regarding the "original solitude" come to mind. This will be examined in the next subsection.

¹⁵Sc, 55: "Aber indem er sich mit dem mitmenschlichen Du befaßt, in ihm ein Geheimnis von Abstand und Nähe, von Verschiedenheit und Aufeinander-Bezogenheit erkennt, lernt er verstehen, daß diese Beziehung auf eine absolute Liebe verweist und sich nur in ihr erfüllen kann. Er kommt in ein Verhältnis zum dreieinigen Gott." Cf. IK, 319. Here Adrienne explains that with the creation of Eve, the innate relational character within Adam became visible to him. It was still too soon for Adam and Eve to understand, but this relationality or duality also had the purpose of ordering them to Christ. This would be revealed in the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection.

relationship closely resembled man's original prayer relationship to God.¹⁶

Could one consider that Adam and Eve were married in Paradise? Adrienne underlines that they there were "companions." They lived together in the only state that existed. It was only after the fall that they could be considered to be living in the state of marriage.¹⁷ Paradisal Adam and Eve were created to exist "side by side" [*nebeneinanderstehend*].¹⁸ Nonetheless, in their "companionship" and their "side by side" union, Adam and Eve lived forth from the same unity of the triune God.¹⁹ In this way, their union drew its sustenance from the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although Adam and Eve were God's creatures, they benefitted from the intimate union of the divine Persons. This is similar to the child who lives forth from the union of his parents even though he is not united to them in the same way that they are united to each other. Hence, the child experiences something of the intimate bond between his father and mother even though he is not privy to all the secrets and mysteries his parents share between them.

Adrienne's understanding of the paradisal unity between man and woman can be summarized in three points: 1) In order to unite, man and woman first had to know a *prior tension of being two*. One is not the same as the other; each is different. Indeed, there is a *fundamental structure of "being two"* in man, but also in God. 2) When Adam and Eve unite, the *solitude of "being other" or "being two" is overcome*. 3) Nonetheless, it is precisely by "*being other*" that *each is drawn to the other and drawn to God*. And in being drawn to God, paradisal man and woman were granted *participation in trinitarian unity and prayer*.

Adrienne's insights on the "being other" and "being two" [*Zweisein*] of Adam and Eve leave some open questions. She affirms that "being two" is fundamental in man and God. But what exactly would this "being two" constitute? It was examined above from the

¹⁶NB X, 248: "Ursprünglich war das Verhältnis der Geschlechter sehr nah dem Gebetsverhältnis des Menschen zu Gott gedacht. Je vollkommener die Hingabe der Gatten an einander, um so größer die Öffnung zu Gott." Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering*, 40-41. Matro notes that there is a hierarchy in Adam and Eve's fundamental attitude of disponibility towards their Creator. First, they know God as their Creator. Next, they know God in each other. Lastly, they know God in all of creation.

¹⁷Cf. NB IX, 434: "Kann man von Adam und Eva sagen, sie seien Verheiratete? Sie sind einfach Gefährten, compagnons. Und von da aus bleibt alles offen. Es gibt nur einen Stand, in dem sie stehen, weil sie in Gott sind und Gott sie so gemacht hat."

¹⁸Cf. NB XII, 148: "Der Mensch im Paradies, Mann und Frau, ist zunächst einmal jeder für sich, nebeneinanderstehend geschaffen: das ist ein Vergleich für das Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Mensch." Cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Fontana Books, 1972¹¹), 55-84. Adrienne's description of paradisal man and woman living side-by-side brings to mind Lewis's understanding of human Friendship one of the "four loves." (According to Lewis, Affection, Friendship, Eros and Charity are the four loves.) Lewis writes that the image one has of Friendship is likely to be one of two friends side by side, enjoying a common interest. In contrast, the image of Eros is one of two lovers face-to-face, absorbed in each other. Friendship, the least jealous of the loves, is born when two persons discover one another and share their vision. Lewis underscores that Friendship often must be a foundation for Eros. Two persons who begin their relationship as friends and later become lovers will not want to share their erotic love with a third person but they will have no jealousy about sharing their Friendship. Although Lewis states that Friendship between sexes is not the most common, it seems clear that Friendship love is extremely important for a loving and lasting conjugal relationship. Indeed, in the spousal relationship, it is possible to see all four loves in play.

¹⁹Cf. NB XII, 159: "Adam und Eva waren nackt und besaßen einander in der Nacktheit. Sie besaßen einander ähnlich, wie in Gott Vater und Sohn sich besitzen." Cf. NB XII, 151; Sc, 54.

point of view of gender when it was shown how the difference in the sexes is part of God's original design. However, is it possible that Adrienne von Speyr also refers to man's body-spirit structure or some other duality in man? Indeed, although man and woman are made in the "image and likeness" of God, they are not God. Nonetheless, is it possible to affirm that man lives duality (man-woman, body-spirit etc.) analogously to how duality is lived in God? Since he is made in God's "image and likeness," it would seem possible to answer this question in the affirmative.

In his *Wednesday Catechisms on Divine and Human Love* (1979-1984), John Paul II explores in detail man's dual nature, the paradisaical unity between God and man and the original state of man and woman. Earlier, mention was made of the similarities between the theological anthropology of Adrienne von Speyr and John Paul II. Indeed, because Adrienne's insights on original man and woman appear to anticipate some of the contributions of John Paul II in the realm of theological anthropology, it would be helpful at this juncture to turn to the Holy Father's thought. This will be done not only to compare and contrast John Paul's theology with Adrienne's insights on paradisaical man and woman, but also to shed some further light on them. In this way, we will be in a better position to answer the questions posed above.

9.2.3 The Theology of the Body: John Paul II and Adrienne von Speyr

As noted above, the alert reader will discover similarities in the theological anthropology of Adrienne von Speyr and John Paul II. Most pertinent to this thesis are John Paul's writings on man's *original solitude*, *original unity* and the *nuptial meaning of the body*. Regarding man's *original solitude*, the Holy Father observes that when God speaks of man being "alone" in *Genesis* 2, 18,²⁰ he is speaking of the solitude of man (*ha-'adam*) as such since the terms "man/male" (*'ish*) and "woman/female" (*'ishshah*) are introduced only *after* the creation of woman in *Genesis* 2, 21-22.²¹ Therefore, man's solitude precedes the creation of the sexes, not primarily chronologically, but anthropologically, that is, by its very nature. Original solitude, thus, is an anthropological reality of man. Furthermore, God allows man to come to the awareness of his solitude on his own. Just as Adrienne writes that original man comes to awareness of his *fruitfulness* by observing the world around him, so too John Paul notes that God allows man the freedom to observe and think for himself in order to come to awareness of his *personhood*. Through the naming of the animals, man becomes aware that he is superior to them; one can say that he is searching for a definition of himself.²² And as he searches for self-definition, he is cognizant, through his body, that he is in solitude. He could have concluded that he was similar to the animals. Instead, man realizes he is different and that he is in solitude. From there, man is led to the awareness that he is a person.²³

²⁰Gn 2, 18: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'"

²¹Gn 2, 21-22: "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man."

²²John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 44-47.

²³John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 48-50.

When the Holy Father speaks of the *original unity* of man and woman, he observes that original bodiliness is not necessarily identified with sexuality. Certainly, in its normal constitution, the human body is either male or female. However, the fact that each man and woman is *body*, is a more profound, innate reality of human nature than is *gender*. Thus, man is *body* in a more fundamental way than he is *male* or *female*. In other words, male and female are two ways of being body.²⁴

We are now in a position to better illuminate Adrienne's understanding of God and man's fundamental nature of "being two" [*Zweisein*]. In the context of the discussion in the preceding section, Adrienne's use of the "being-two" terminology refers primarily to gender. Man is either a man or a woman. However, the first man (human person) is also a creature with a body and spirit. Yet, as we saw above, man as such (*ha-'adam* or *homo*) lives his body-spirit dynamism in either a masculine or a feminine body.²⁵ Because Adam is the "type of him who is to come,"²⁶ his body and spirit are an image of the God-man. Hence, the unity of Adam's body and spirit is an image of the unity of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. Since man is body and spirit only as male and female, both man's "being-two in himself" (body and spirit) and his "being-two in gender" (male or female) are images of God. Consequently, man and woman in marriage are to be as closely united to each other as body and spirit are united in man.²⁷ Ultimately, Christ is the source and model of the unity between body and spirit and that between man and woman. Moreover, Christ gives man and woman a share of this unity in his Eucharist.

Adrienne sustains that "being-two" is fundamental in both God and man. Furthermore, as we have seen, man's body-spirit duality is "incarnated" in his body, whether it be male or female. Since man's fundamental solitude remains, it too is "incarnated" in either a man/male or a woman/female. Yet, Adrienne asserts that it is precisely the "being-two" of man that draws him out of solitude. Bestowed with a mutual inclination to each other, man and woman experience this "being-inclined-to-the-other" [*Zueinandersein*] and are drawn out of solitude unconsciously.²⁸ Adrienne's insight of the *Zueinandersein* of man and woman is very close to John Paul's understanding of *communio personarum* and the *nuptial meaning of the body* that we now proceed to review.

²⁴John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 54-57. It is important to understand that John Paul understands "body" as a "spiritualized body." The body does not exist without the spirit, and vice versa. Man's spirit is lived through his body. Thus, when only "body" is mentioned, it is clear that John Paul understands it as "spirit-body."

²⁵Cf. *Gn* 1, 27.

²⁶*GS*, 22.

²⁷Cf. *Gn* 2, 21-25. The fact that God takes a rib from Adam's side to create the woman is an indication of how closely united man and woman are to be. They are united to each other in the same way that one body part is united to the body.

²⁸Cf. *Sc*, 53.

John Paul II observes that through masculinity and femininity, man overcomes the limits of solitude. Indeed, this is the original design of the Creator. In the Yahwist account of creation (*Gn* 2), solitude is the way that leads man to unity, to a *communio personarum*.²⁹ In *Genesis* 2, 18, when God says, "It is not good that man be alone," he shows that the "being-two" of man, the male-female duality or gender differentiation, is part of his original design for the Creation of man and woman. Consequently, man experiences both *original solitude* and *gender differentiation* positively; he perceives them as a value. In other words, John Paul asserts that man's experience of original solitude leads to *communio personarum*. One is a person, therefore, by opening to the other. Moreover, although the Yahwist account does not speak of the "image of God," one can deduce from the Priestly account (*Gn* 1) that "man is made in the 'image and likeness of God' not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons that man and woman form from the very beginning. [...] Man is the image of God, not so much in the image of solitude, but in the image of communion."³⁰ Indeed, man is not so much the image of one Person, but a communion of Persons.

Finally, John Paul's understanding of the *nuptial meaning of the body*, complements Adrienne's observations regarding the *Zusein* and the *Zueinandersein* of man. Adrienne notes that in their otherness, man and woman are drawn to each other and into relationship with God. John Paul echoes this when he indicates that God's words in *Genesis* 2, 18 reveal the essence of the person. Namely, in being alone, man does not completely realize his essence. No, he realizes it only by existing *with* someone and *for* someone. In other words, man realizes himself by giving himself. This *nuptial meaning of the body* is just as fundamental to man as his bodiliness.³¹

²⁹Cf. *GS*, 12: "For by his innermost nature man is a social being; and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts."

³⁰John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 58-59. With this observation, John Paul opens a door to the question of drawing analogies between the *communio personarum* of the Trinity and the *communio personarum* of the spouses and the family. We will treat this theological question in more detail in subsection 10.2.10.

³¹John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 74. Cf. Peter J. Elliot, *What God Has Joined...The Sacramentality of Marriage* (New York: Alba House, 1990) xxvii. Elliot points out that ultimately the *nuptial meaning of the body* refers to our "bodily destiny of eternal union with God, as resurrected persons." For married people this *nuptiality* has an immediate meaning in the self-giving of redeemed sexuality and in the daily self-giving of man and woman living as one.

In this section, it has been shown how Adrienne von Speyr's insights on the paradisaical unity of man and woman anticipate John Paul II's theology of the body, and at the same time, are complemented by it. In order to see more clearly the parallels between the two lines of thought, it is helpful to give a summary as follows:

Adrienne von Speyr

1. *Zweisein*: From man's prior experience of *being two*, he can become one. Man and woman live side-by-side, but each is opened to the other.

2. *Zweigeschlechtlichkeit*: *Duality of gender* in man is fundamental to his nature. Duality is fundamental in God such that the Son incarnates this duality in himself (hypostatic union) and from this duality, he founds the Church.

3. *Zueinandersein*: Opening oneself to the other, one is drawn out of solitude. The presence of the other draws man and woman to each other, but also into relationship with God.

4. *Fruchtbarkeit*: Man is cognizant of his *fruitfulness* through his bodily experiences of the world around him.

John Paul II

1. *original solitude*: Man's consciousness of being in solitude is a more profound reality than his gender. Man is led from awareness of his original solitude to cognizance of his personhood.

2. *original unity*: Man is body in a more fundamental way than he is male or female. Man and woman are two ways of being body.

3. *nuptial meaning of the body*: Man realizes his existence by existing with and for someone; to be self-gift to the other. Man and woman's *nuptiality* is as fundamental as *bodiliness*.

4. *personhood*: Man is cognizant of his *personhood* through his bodily experiences of the world around him.

Towards the end of the preceding section the question was posed: What constitutes man's duality? With the help of Adrienne von Speyr and John Paul II, we can offer the beginning of an answer. In his fundamental being, man is a person who realizes himself with and for the other. Through his body he is made cognizant of his God-given fruitfulness and his personhood. Through the presence of the other, man is drawn out of his original solitude to communion with the other and the Other, who is God. While duality of gender is fundamental in man, God's duality is revealed in Christ and in the Christ-Church union. Since all men and women are created in Christ who "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (*Col* 1, 15), all should strive to embody his unity in their lives whether with another in marriage or with Christ in the consecrated life.

9.2.4 The Unity of Bodily and Spiritual Fruitfulness, Marriage and Virginitly in Paradise

In Paradise, Adam and Eve not only lived in close union with each other, but also their unity was manifested in the unity between *bodily and spiritual fruitfulness* and *marriage and virginity*. In Adrienne's writings, that address the theme of paradisaal fruitfulness, she sustains that in some mysterious way, man and woman in Paradise were both virginally and bodily fruitful. Somehow Adam and Eve's bodily fruitfulness stemmed completely from their spiritual fruitfulness.³² Therefore, according to Adrienne, in Paradise, procreation came about in a corporal, nonsexual, virginal way directly as a result of the spiritual union of Adam and Eve with God. Indeed, children born to Adam and Eve would have been conceived completely "without awareness of things of the flesh" [*ohne Bewußtwerden des Fleischlichen*]. The love that Adam and Eve had for each other would not have been narrowed down to a single act of conjugal love. Rather, man and woman would have existed in a "state of love" where the disponibility [*Bereitschaft*] of love co-existed with the act of love. Adam and Eve would not have determined the extent of their physical fruitfulness; God simply would have given them children and they would have accepted them.³³

Adrienne states that in order to understand paradisaal fruitfulness, one must contemplate the Mother of God who perfectly embodies physical fruitfulness and virginity.³⁴ Indeed, "all forms of Christian fruitfulness, whether physical or spiritual, virginal or marital, are modeled after Mary."³⁵ The Virgin Mother manifests in her very being what it means to give oneself over completely and to be blessed with physical fruitfulness in return. She had only *one* Child, but in him she was ready to embrace, and indeed, truly did receive all mankind as children in the one Child.³⁶ Because the Son of God encounters Mary spiritually and bodily in the most perfect way, she perfectly embodies the encounter of all men and

³²Cf. *Sc*, 73: "Als sei die leibliche Fruchtbarkeit jetzt eine Frucht der geistigen innerhalb des Gehorsams." Cf. *MH*, 61. [56]: "Denn in Paradies hätte es nicht zwei sich ausschließende Stände gegeben. Die leibliche Fruchtbarkeit wäre in keinem Gegensatz zur gottgeweihten Jungfräulichkeit gestanden." Cf. *I K*, 191-192: "Damals gibt es das Auseinander der Körper, aber im Zueinander der Geister. [...] Das Gebot, sich zu vermehren und die Erde zu erfüllen, war innerhalb des Gebotes der wesentlichen Fruchtbarkeit formal ungefähr so enthalten wie später in der christlichen Forderung der Jungfräulichkeit Armut und Gehorsam enthalten sein sollen. [...] Es gäbe eine Form der Sehnsucht des Mannes nach dem Weib, des Weibes nach dem Mann, die ganz in der Sehnsucht des Vaters nach dem Sohn, des Sohnes nach dem Vater geborgen wäre. Sie wäre nicht unfleischlich, aber unsexuell." Note that Adrienne uses both the *indicative* and *subjunctive* moods in describing paradisaal life. She asserts the compatibility of virginity and procreation in Paradise, but *how exactly* this occurred she leaves more open.

³³Cf. *NB XII*, 148-149.

³⁴Cf. *IK*, 192: "Was diese Überholung hätte sein können, davon wird etwas an der--freilich ganz andersartigen und einmaligen--Fruchtbarkeit Marias sichtbar. Wer hat das erste Gottesgebot, die Erde zu bevölkern, besser erfüllt als sie! Wer hat dabei besser als sie bewiesen, daß leibliche Fruchtbarkeit innerhalb der geistigen, sogar jungfräulichen geborgen sein kann!"

³⁵*MH*, 184. [170]: "Alle Formen christlicher Fruchtbarkeit, leibliche wie geistige, jungfräuliche wie eheliche sind in Maria vorgebildet."

³⁶*MH*, 187. [173]: "Führt der gewählte Weg in die Ehe und soll die geforderte Fruchtbarkeit auch eine leibliche werden, dann zeigt Maria, wie sie auf Grund vollkommener Hingabe körperlich Mutter wurde und auch wenn sie nur *ein* Kind besaß, doch in diesem einen alle Menschen als Kinder zu umfassen bereit war und sie auch in Wahrheit als Kinder empfang."

women in the Lord.³⁷ Thus, by gazing on Mary, one can begin to fathom the paradisaical fruitfulness of Adam and Eve.

Furthermore, Adrienne notes that in Paradise not only did nonsexual, spiritual fruitfulness lead to physical fruitfulness, but there was a *unity between marriage and virginity*. More precisely, in Paradise, there was only one state of life that encompassed both marriage and virginity.³⁸ That there was only one state of life in Paradise follows from the perfect union of physical and spiritual fruitfulness. Moreover, Adrienne sustains that in this single, paradisaical state, Adam and Eve would have lived out the command to “be fruitful and multiply” under the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.³⁹

Not only does Adrienne propose the Virgin Mary as the best model for understanding the paradisaical unity of spiritual and physical fruitfulness, but also she points to the Mary’s *fiat* to affirm that the unity of marriage and virginity was part of God’s

³⁷IK, 323. “Aber indem sie im Sohn ihre Weiblichkeit findet, nimmt sie zugleich alle Generationen mit, die hinter ihr liegen: Männer wie Frauen. Sie verkörpert im Grunde als Einzige das Vollkommene des vorhergehenden Verses: die Begegnung beider im Herrn.” The perfect encounter between the Son of God and Mary will be discussed in more detail in section 9.3.1.

³⁸Cf. *Ma*, 446: “Wäre die Sünde nicht gewesen, so hätte Adam und Eva die Möglichkeit bestanden, in Gott vollkommen eins zu sein, jeder für sich in Gott und wiederum beide in der vollkommenen Einigung mit dem andern in Gott, so daß die Frage Ehe-Ehelosigkeit sich gar nicht gestellt hätte, sondern alle den einen von Gott vorgezeichneten Weg gegangen wären.” Cf. *St*, 71. [71]: “In der paradiesischen Schöpfung gab es nur *einen* Stand.” The latter citation is a good example how Adrienne uses the indicative mood to underline her certainty that there was only one paradisaical state of life.

³⁹Cf. *IK*, 193: “Auch Adam wurde von Gott zeremonienlos geschaffen. Adam war im primärsten ‘Ordenstand,’ und die ursprüngliche Beziehung zwischen Adam und Eva war auf der Ebene einer solchen Totalität gedacht. Und ihre Gehorsamssendung, die sie im Gehorsam hätten ausführen sollen, wäre gewesen: Wachset und vermehrt euch und erfüllet die Erde!” Adrienne does not state explicitly how poverty, chastity and obedience would have been lived in Paradise. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 71-75.82. [90-95.104]. Von Balthasar sheds further light on how Adam and Eve lived the evangelical counsels in Paradise.

Obedience was lived as an act of pure faith. Adam and Eve knew only good; they did not have to distinguish between good and evil. Until the moment that the serpent appeared to Eve (*Gn* 3, 1-5), she did not even know any contradiction between obedience to God and freedom. Essentially, their obedience was faith, whereby they accepted their coming from God and gave this back to him repeatedly in love. Although Adam and Eve had bodily drives, they knew no concupiscence. Thus, their obedience was a complete giving over to God, an attitude which also shaped their virginity and poverty.

Virginity did not demand renunciation as it does in the post-paradisaical world, but it was the complete fulfillment of love and led to perfect fruitfulness. Just as obedience to God in faith demanded no renunciation of freedom to choose between good and evil, so too virginity demanded no painful renunciation for its carrying out. This was the original plan of Creation. Moreover, Adam and Eve lived in a perfect innocence that knew no shame. It was only after sinning, that they felt shame and covered themselves. Von Balthasar clarifies that in themselves, bodily drives and shame are not evil. Only the disorder that causes drives to appear exteriorly is evil; it is this which elicits from the body the response of shame.

Poverty was the combination of perfect riches and perfect poverty. Just as it would never have occurred to Adam and Eve to hide their nakedness, so too they would never have considered obtaining something for themselves. God gave them everything they needed either directly or indirectly through nature. In return, they gave back to God all they received. For Adam and Eve, poverty meant a total lack of private ownership. It was only after the fall, when they saw they were naked and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves, that Adam and Eve knew private ownership. Again, like freedom of will and the feeling of shame, private ownership is not evil in itself. Nonetheless, it is a result of the fall.

original design. When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary at the Annunciation, she leaves the exact unfolding of her marriage open to God, just as she has allowed him to form her life up to that point. Adrienne notes that one cannot even speculate that Mary expected children from Joseph. If she had done so, then she would have determined something ahead of time. But because Mary is sinless, she lives within the paradisaal reality of Adam and Eve where the states of marriage and virginity were one. Therefore, even though Mary understands the laws of human reproduction, she sees no contradiction between marriage and virginity.⁴⁰ In the person of Mary, one can begin to comprehend how marriage and virginity would have co-existed in Paradise.

Adrienne's doctrine on original fruitfulness raises a number of questions. First, because she places so much emphasis on virginal-bodily fruitfulness, does not her thought bespeak a depreciation of conjugal sexuality? Second, it is clear why virginal-bodily fruitfulness is necessary for the birth of the Son of God, but why is it necessary also in Paradise? Third, if virginal-bodily fruitfulness would have been the norm in Paradise, would not this fact diminish the uniqueness of the Virgin Birth? In other words, fourth, does not Adrienne's doctrine testify to an excessive retro-projection of the eschatological state onto the protological state? These are all important questions that demand responses. However, they will be set aside for now. After addressing von Balthasar's contribution to the theme of paradisaal fruitfulness in the next section, we will return to the posed queries in subsection 9.2.6.

9.2.5 Paradisaal Fruitfulness: Von Balthasar's Development of A. von Speyr's Insights

Although Adrienne von Speyr's reflections on Adam and Eve's fruitfulness and state of life before the fall are particularly provocative, it is difficult to imagine the *how* or *why* of paradisaal fruitfulness in her overall vision. In his book, *Christlicher Stand*, von Balthasar takes up Adrienne's insights on paradisaal fruitfulness and examines them in the light of the Church fathers' contributions to the same theme.⁴¹ His contributions are presented here in order to shed further light on Adrienne's doctrine.

Regarding *bodily fruitfulness* in Paradise, like Adrienne, von Balthasar holds that somehow Adam and Eve were virginally and bodily fruitful. Von Balthasar clarifies that primordial man's fruitfulness was a result of his obedience to God that was essentially a faith wherein "man's body and its powers stood in the same relationship to his soul just as his natural powers did to the supernatural powers of loving faith."⁴² Adam and Eve had drives [*Triebe*] even in Paradise, but they functioned in such a way that they were helpful to them and not a hindrance. Only after the fall was a divorce established between virginity and fruitfulness. Thus, the virginity of the primordial Eve would not have been jeopardized by her motherhood. Von Balthasar notes that only one image of primordial virginity and

⁴⁰Cf. *MH*, 60-61. [55-56].

⁴¹Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Hold Fast to What is Good*, 88. In an interview with Angelo Scola, Von Balthasar noted: "All I attempted to do was gather [Adrienne's insights] up and embed [them] in a space, such as the theology of the Fathers, that of the Middle Ages and the modern age, with which I was fairly familiar."

⁴²H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 74. [93].

fruitfulness remains in our fallen world: the Virgin Mother.⁴³

Even though Mary remains the model for the co-existence of virginal and bodily fruitfulness, many aspects regarding the virginal conception and birth of Jesus remain a mystery to us. Likewise, many aspects regarding paradisaical virginal and bodily fruitfulness remain unrevealed. But this did not hinder medieval theologians from theological speculation. Above all, von Balthasar notes that medieval theologians were in agreement concerning the *fact* of paradisaical virginal and bodily fruitfulness; they just could not agree on *how* it came about. He sets up the problem in this way:

All the theologians of the great age go forth in their thinking from the assumption that there was no 'corruptio' at all in Paradise and that there also could be none in man and his virginity. On the other hand, they were convinced that man would have 'increased and multiplied' even in his paradisaical state, since God's command to do so came before the fall. As a result, they seek a synthesis between the married state and the state of virginity that is philosophically necessary, but inconceivable.⁴⁴

As long as theologians stated the fact of the synthesis between marriage and virginity and virginal and bodily fruitfulness, they were on safe ground. But as soon as they attempted to explain the exact manner that this came about, they encountered difficulties.⁴⁵

Von Balthasar summarizes three different views on paradisaical fruitfulness among medieval theologians. A *first view* was held by a group of theologians, including Aquinas, Richard of Mediavilla and Aegidius of Rome, who tried to show that sexual intercourse in Paradise would have been the same before and after the fall, then attempted to reconcile virginity with this view. A *second view* was espoused by Saint Augustine who emphasized that before the fall sexual intercourse and birth came about differently than after the fall. He was convinced that sexual characteristics of the body were the same in Paradise as they are today and that some form of sexual intercourse existed that would leave the female organs unscathed [*unversehrt*]. Nonetheless, he concluded that we can no longer imagine the precise nature of paradisaical sexual intercourse. A *third view* was espoused by several theologians who stated the fact of the compatibility of virginity and bodily fruitfulness, but did not attempt to describe it. Theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and St. Jerome came to this conclusion for two reasons. First, they agreed that because Paradise is the realm of virginity, marriage, at least as we know it, had no place there.⁴⁶ Marriage existed only after the fall. Second, men and

⁴³Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 72-75. [91-94].

⁴⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 75-76. [95].

⁴⁵Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 76. [95-96].

⁴⁶Adrienne's observation that Adam and Eve were "companions" before the fall, rather than husband and wife, would be in accord with these theologians on this point. However, von Balthasar seems to say otherwise. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 73. [93]: "Schon bevor sie der Sünde verfielen, waren sie Mann und Frau." It is possible that on this point Adrienne and von Balthasar are saying the same thing, but in different ways. They both sustain the paradisaical co-existence of virginity and bodily fruitfulness. And they both agree that there was one paradisaical state of life. They differ in what they call the paradisaical state of life. In any case, they would both agree that marriage after the fall is different from the union of Adam and Eve before the fall. Above all, it is important to underline the paradisaical "roots" of sacramental marriage as the pristine state in which marriage was born. (Cf. John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 63: "Il testo di Gen 2,

women would have been fruitful in a “spiritual” [*geistig*] way, comparable to the angels. Nonetheless, they admitted that this manner of bodily and spiritual fruitfulness is no longer comprehensible to fallen man.⁴⁷

Although these theologians derived many different theories regarding paradisaal fruitfulness, von Balthasar reiterates that they all agreed that the difference of the sexes was part of God’s original intention for man. At the same time, their preoccupation with reconciling virginity with bodily fruitfulness led to wild speculation as to the exact nature of paradisaal procreation. Von Balthasar summarizes his research:

The teaching of the Church Fathers and of the Scholastics can be summarized in this way: They attempted to explain in one way or another the compatibility of virginity with procreation in the original state, while being more concerned about virginity than about procreation. Their interpretations carry weight only insofar as they express their efforts to find an explanation of the one fact that was indisputable to them. Therefore, if one were to preserve what is of permanent value in their explanations, one would want to emphasize that *the difference in the sexes belonged beyond the shadow of a doubt to God’s original intention in creating man*. Thus, it cannot be seen as something that emerged after the fall. Rather, the difference is part of the *imago Dei*. [cf. Gn 1, 26-27] If this were not this way, Christ could neither have pointed to the relationship of the sexes to describe his mysterious union with the Church, nor could he have given to the sacrament of marriage the power and the real possibility of symbolizing this perfect relationship in the relationship of the sexes.⁴⁸

From von Balthasar’s explications, three points can be underscored. First, it is evident that there is some clear support from the Church fathers (namely from Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and St. Jerome) for Adrienne von Speyr’s position on paradisaal virginal-bodily fruitfulness. Second, it is apparent that the fathers were in agreement on the indisputable fact that the differentiation of the sexes was part of God’s original intention. Third, following from the first and second points, it cannot be concluded that paradisaal bodily fruitfulness would have been virginal simply based on the existential circumstances of the original differentiation of the sexes. Adrienne’s doctrine on paradisaal fruitfulness demands more examination and testing, a task that will be resumed in the next section.

24 definisce tale carattere del legame coniugale in riferimento al primo uomo e alla prima donna, ma nello stesso tempo lo fa anche nella prospettiva di tutto il futuro terreno dell’uomo. Perciò, a suo tempo, Cristo si richiamerà a quel testo, come ugualmente attuale nella sua epoca.”) Furthermore, since there is no marriage in Heaven (Cf. Lk 20, 34-36), we can imagine that our existence in Heaven will resemble in some way the primordial existence of man and woman. Thus, we have two reasons to gaze on the paradisaal union of man and woman: to understand better paradisaal union between man and woman and to ponder heavenly union. Both images serve as reminders for the states of life.

⁴⁷H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 76-81. [96-103].

⁴⁸H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 81. [102-103]. Emphasis (italics) mine. A. Scola uses this same citation to underscore a major point in his analysis of “human sexuality as *imago Dei*” as was noted in subsection 9.2.2.

To conclude this section, it is evident that there is some support from the Church fathers for Adrienne von Speyr's doctrine of virginal-bodily fruitfulness. Furthermore, both von Balthasar and Adrienne point to Mary as the key to understanding primordial fecundity. Turning again to Adrienne's insights, another piece of the puzzle can be added to provide a clearer picture. She sustains that Mary's assent to bear the Son is actually one vow in which poverty, obedience and chastity were connected and inseparable. Mary could not have been poor without being virgin and vice versa. Likewise, she could not have been obedient without being virgin and so forth. All three are expressions of one assent.⁴⁹ In a similar way, it can be speculated that Adam and Eve did not live three different assents. All three counsels were expressed in the one desire to live in and with God and with each other in a perfect way. To a certain extent, religious life draws the distinction between poverty, chastity and obedience as concrete and indispensable ways to follow Christ in the world. However, in the primordial world of Adam and Eve, as well as in the person of Mary, there exists only one all-encompassing assent to God.

9.2.6 A Critique of Adrienne von Speyr's Doctrine on Original Fruitfulness

At this point, the four questions posed in section 9.2.4 can be taken up again in order to provide a critique of Adrienne von Speyr's doctrine on original fruitfulness. First it was asked: Does Adrienne's thought bespeak a depreciation of conjugal sexuality? No. Although Adrienne espouses the doctrine of paradisaical "virginal relations" [*jungfräulicher Verkehr*], it remains clear that she perceives chaste sexual relations between Christian spouses to be a true gift of God. As is apparent from Adrienne's insights in *Christiane, Theologie der Geschlechter* and other writings, conjugal sexual love unites spouses more closely, grants them participation in divine love, brings much joy to the spouses and opens them to spiritual and bodily fruitfulness.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Cf. *MH*, 11. [11]: "Ihr Jawort ist ein Gelübde des Gehorsams, ebenso sehr wie der Keuschheit und der Armut."

⁵⁰Cf. *W*, 40. [47]: "Und Gott hat den Menschen, um die Langeweile der Liebe zu vermeiden, zwei Dinge geschenkt: einmal das Geschlecht mit der Möglichkeit, leiblich fruchtbar zu sein, Kinder zu haben, die durch ihr Werden und Wachsen, durch ihr eigenes Leben das Leben der Eltern befruchten, so daß dieses von Alter zu Alter, von Kind zu Kind neue Spannkraft erhält. Aber darüber hinaus hat Gott ein weit größeres Geschenk gemacht: er hat der menschlichen Liebe Anteil gewährt an seiner eigenen göttlichen Liebe." Cf. *I K*, 180: "Der Mann, der zur Frau geht, erwartet etwas von ihr: Ergänzung, Freude. Und er bekommt es, weil Gott die Geschlechter aufeinander abgestimmt hat." Cf. *Chr*, 61-62: "In die Gabe des Geschlechtslebens hat Gott sein Geschenk an uns, ein Geschenk der Freude und der Bereicherung, zugleich aber auch unser Geschenk an Ihn gelegt; denn er hat uns das Leben nicht in sich abgeschlossen gegeben, sondern so sehr zu Ihm hin geöffnet, daß wir Ihm in wietesten Sinne geweihtes junges Leben weidergeben dürfen." Perhaps, one may argue that Adrienne espouses the view of paradisaical "virginal relations" because of her own prudishness. But this view is not supportable. Von Balthasar explains that although Adrienne learned the complete truth of the "facts of life" only in medical school during her early twenties, she nonetheless was not prudish. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Erster Blick*, 25. [29]. "Obschon sie um eine Zusammengehörigkeit von Mann und Frau zum Entstehen des Kindes weiß und keinerlei Prüderie kennt [...] blieb sie bis in die klinischen Semester in fast unbegreiflicher Weise unaufgeklärt." To demonstrate Adrienne's straightforwardness in dealing with sexual matters, von Balthasar recounts the time in the operating room of St. Loup when Adrienne had to support the leg of a male patient for a long period of time while an operation was performed on his genitals. She accepted this as a natural and matter-of-fact situation, only complaining that his leg was a bit heavy. Cf. *AmL*, 194. [227].

Second: It is clear why virginal-bodily fruitfulness is necessary for the birth of the Son of God, but why would it be necessary also in Paradise? By espousing virginal-bodily fecundity, Adrienne preserves a certain *inclusivity* of love in Paradise that is not possible in redeemed conjugal sexual love. For good reasons, married love is *exclusive*. Man and woman give oneself completely to each other, and to no other, for life.⁵¹ The most personal secrets and mysteries they share between them should remain between them in order that their mutual transparency be founded on a loving trust that anchors their union. Different from conjugal love, God's love is completely *personal*, but also infinitely *inclusive*. God longingly desires that the most intimate truths of himself be revealed to all men through the Son.⁵² Father, Son and Holy Spirit tirelessly beckon to man, drawing him closer to the infinitely profound mysteries of their triune love. Paradisal virginal-bodily love between man and woman would have been more *inclusive* than redeemed conjugal sexual love. At the same time, it would have been a more perfect "image and likeness" of triune *inclusive* love. Paradisal man and woman would not have had to choose between one state or another, thus renouncing one or the other state, in order to follow God's call to "be fruitful and multiply." Although a child would have been the fruit of the virginal, indissoluble union between one man and one woman, the spiritual fruitfulness bestowed on paradisal couples would have been more freely shared with all other spousal unions.

Third: If virginal-bodily fruitfulness would have been the norm in Paradise, would not this fact diminish the uniqueness of the Virgin Birth? No. On the one hand, one could argue that in a sinless world, the Incarnation of the Son would not have been necessary. On the other hand, because "in him all things were created" (*Col* 1, 16), it is clear that one way or another the Son would have come among us. Moreover, Adrienne herself underscores the necessity of the Incarnation whether or not man would have sinned.⁵³ Nonetheless, Eve did not give birth to Jesus. Only Mary is the Mother of God. Only she was chosen indisputably by God to bear the Son. Above all, this is what makes her, the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth unique. Certainly, we do not know how things would have unfolded had Adam and Eve not sinned. We only know that their sin was a reality and that the Immaculate Woman brought forth the Son of God. As the new Eve, Mary embodied what Eve was not able to: sinlessness, virginity, inclusive love, unlimited bodily and spiritual fruitfulness. In a sinless world, if a woman other than Mary would have given birth to the Son, this would have made her and the wondrous event unique.

Fourth: Does not Adrienne's doctrine testify to an excessive retro-projection of the eschatological state onto the protological state? Adrienne does not project the eschatological state onto the protological state. Rather her theology evinces a keen awareness of the salvific and sanctifying power of Christ's virginal love. Von Balthasar

⁵¹When a spouse does not give him or herself completely to the other, they can encounter difficulties. For example, the work-aholic husband who gives more of himself to his work than to his family, risks alienating himself from his wife and children. The wife who is more interested in spending time with her girlfriends than with developing a better friendship with her husband, can stifle spiritual and bodily fruitfulness that God desires to bestow on her and her husband.

⁵²Cf. *Jo* IV, 146-147. [121-122]. Cf. subsection 10.2.1.

⁵³Cf. *NB* XII, 155: "Sowohl der paradiesische wie der nachparadiesische Zustand der Geschlechter erhält durch die Ankunft Christi seinen vollen Sinn."

describes the point of departure of Adrienne's theology of the sexes in these terms: "It is from the paramount fruitfulness of virginity that the bodily fruitfulness of man and woman gets its justification and sacramental sanctification. The order of Creation is incorporated into the christological and ecclesial order of Redemption."⁵⁴ Adrienne von Speyr's insights on Paradise follow from her recognition that Christ pours himself out on the Cross to his Bride the Church. His immense love is virginal, bridal and bodily fruitful in his Eucharist. In some way, paradisaal love between man and woman was an image of this. With the fall into sin, spousal love would need to be incorporated into the Christ-Church union. However, the *felix culpa* of Christ's Redemption results in the man-woman relationship being raised to a higher dignity.

In conclusion, it is important to note that this type of speculative thought is carried out within the "playground of theology." The Church has never made a pronouncement as to the exact nature of paradisaal love. Although Adrienne upholds the *what* of paradisaal bodily-virginal fruitfulness, she does not explain precisely *how* it would have transpired. Above all, she cites Jesus Christ as the perfect standard.⁵⁵ Of all humans, Mary best follows Christ and embodies his standard. Both Christ and Mary incorporate the enmeshing of spiritual and bodily fruitfulness: Christ in the Eucharist and Mary in her virginal bearing of the Son. To contend that there are "virginal roots" to redeemed conjugal love does not in any way indicate a depreciation of conjugal sexuality. Underscoring the "virginity" of matrimonial love merely illuminates its divine, paradisaal origin, its Redemption and points to its heavenly destination.

The idea of the "virginal meaning of the body" emerges throughout Adrienne's writings on the theology of the sexes. For example, as will be demonstrated in *Chapter 10*, the man treats the woman with reverence such that each time they come together sexually, she is "virgin" every time. It is this "virginity" of the body that renews conjugal love. In order to give oneself to the other, one must first have a virginal sense of one's own body: a sense that one's body is God's creation and gift and that it is to be given to him in return. The virginal meaning of the body originates from the paradisaal state where man and woman stood alone before God but were united virginally to each other. In heaven where there is no marriage, the redeemed will also stand alone before God and be united closely with each other.

In today's society, in the media and in other places there is often an extreme reaction against the religious state or the priesthood. There is the sense that it is "not normal" to be a consecrated virgin or a priest. Certainly, a call to the consecrated life or priesthood is different than one to the married state. However, if there were honest acknowledgment that each person experiences the "virginal" meaning of his body, then it would be better understood that one's virginity is lived in two different ways: in marriage and in the consecrated life or priesthood. In his writings, John Paul II has underscored the body's fundamental inclination towards *nuptiality* and man's fundamental *original solitude*.

⁵⁴H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 56-57. [67].

⁵⁵Cf. *NB IX*, 435: "Der Herr erfüllt (oder: überfüllt) in der Kirche, was die Fruchtbarkeit Adams und Evas im Paradies gewesen wäre; wie sie ausgesehen hätte, wissen wir nicht. Wir brauchen es auch nicht zu wissen, weil der Herr jetzt als Ideal genügt."

Perhaps, man's *virginity* is just as fundamental. If the virginal roots of love were to be more widely acknowledged, then in the similar way that the consecrated virgin looks to the bodily fruitful love of spouses in order to better understand the spiritual *nuptiality* of his body, the married person could look to Christ and to the consecrated virgin to better understand his or her *virginity* and fundamental *original solitude*.⁵⁶

9.2.7 The Fall

God created Adam and Eve to live side by side in intimate union with each other and with him, but with sin both the "man-woman" and the "God-man" relationship were altered. Between *man and woman*, the perfect natural and supernatural nature of their union was lost. Man would now dominate the woman, work by the sweat of his brow and the woman would bear children in pain.⁵⁷ Adrienne notes that it is only after sin, that Adam and Eve could be said to be living in a marriage which would be mutually exclusive from virginity.⁵⁸ With sin, asceticism, abstention, atonement and sacrifice become necessary.⁵⁹ After the fall, Adam and Eve experience renunciation and pain for the first time. Nonetheless, through their experiences they are moved to new ways of thinking about God. The negative aspects of their life can open the way for the positive gifts of God.⁶⁰

After the fall, the relationship between *God and man* is also permanently altered. Above all, Adam and Eve deprived themselves of unhindered participation in trinitarian

⁵⁶Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 52: "L' affetto tra l' uomo e la donna è chiamato ad assumere una forma inedita, a imitazione del modo con cui Cristo stesso, anzitutto, ha saputo vivere ogni rapporto umano. Non si dà vera dedizione nell' unione dei diversi, non si dà amore oblativo quando l' altro non è colto all' origine nell' orizzonte di sé e quando diventa solo strumento del proprio compiacimento egoistico."

⁵⁷Cf. K, 106. [134]: "Die Sünde zerstörte das gottgewollte Nebeneinander in der Ehe, die natürliche Übernatürlichkeit und übernatürliche Natürlichkeit des Verhältnisses von Mann und Frau. Der Mann wurde zum Herrscher über die Frau eingesetzt, die in Schmerzen Kinder gebären soll." Cf. also Gn 3, 16.

⁵⁸Cf. NB IX, 434: "Als Sünder können sie nicht mehr in den Stand zurückkehren, in den Gott sie gestellt hatte. Als Sündern gibt ihnen Gott die Aufgabe, Kinder in Schmerzen zu gebären und im Schweiß ihres Angesichts zu arbeiten. Jetzt stehen sie in der Ehe." Adam and Eve live in marriage, but not yet the *Christian* state of marriage. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 185-186. [229-230]. After the fall, in the Old Covenant, marriage was the normal state of life. Paradisal virginity no longer existed. Like marriage, it awaited its institution in Christ: "Die Einheit der Stände ist unwiederbringlich, und die wesentliche Ergänzung der Ehe, die Jungfräulichkeit und ihre besondere geistige und übernatürliche Fruchtbarkeit, sind nur noch als weitentfernte Erinnerung und als unvorstellbare Zukunft lebendig. [...] Daß Jungfräulichkeit überhaupt einen Sinn in Gott und eine Fruchtbarkeit haben kann, war in der Zeit der fleischlichen Vorbilder nicht einzusehen." It is important to note that even though Adrienne maintains marriage, as we know it, emerged only after the fall into sin, the object of the temptation to sin cannot be reduced to a sexual problematic. Cf. Luis Ligier, *Il matrimonio, questioni teologiche e pastorali* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1988) 15-16: "[Le] espressioni 'conoscere il bene e il male' non hanno niente a che fare con l' unione dei sessi."

⁵⁹Cf. Sc, 29-30: "Nacktheit war vorher völlig indifferent, unbeachtet; es gab keine böse Begierlichkeit. Erst wenn diese erwartet, werden Askese, Verzicht, Sühne, Opfer aktuell." Cf. also I K, 194: "Für Eva bedeutet es Buße, vom Mann abhängig zu sein, Kinder zu empfangen, zu gebären, sie aufzuziehen. Für Adam kann es Buße sein, an die Zeiten und Zustände seiner Frau gebunden zu sein, mit den Zufällen ihrer Fruchtbarkeit rechnen zu müssen; demütigend, die geistige Liebe so an das Fleisch gefesselt zu sehen, an all das Peinliche und Tragische, was mit der Geschlechtswelt zusammenhängt. Das Moment der Buße setzt sich durch, ob der Mensch auf den Gebrauch des Geschlechts verzichtet oder nicht."

⁶⁰Cf. NB XII, 152-153.

prayer.⁶¹ With the fall, man and woman form an “I-thou” community and draw a curtain between them and God.⁶² Not only did Adam and Eve have complete access to prayer between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the fall, but also they drew from the strength of the trinitarian unity in order to form a closer union between them. After the fall, Adam and Eve try to reproduce this unity through the sexual act. However, complete union with God will be restored only with the Incarnation, Redemption and sacramental grace. Only when one is “naked” before God in the sacrament of confession, in imitation of the Son who hung vulnerably on the Cross before the Father and all mankind, can one begin to gain back something of original paradisaal innocence.⁶³

Adding to Adrienne’s insights, von Balthasar lists three consequences of the fall that are not to be separated. First, on the one hand, *sexuality* will always be connected with death and the tell-tale signs of death. From now on parturition brings pain.⁶⁴ On the other hand, sexuality will be tied to the struggle between the sexes.⁶⁵ Second, moral autonomy as the *knowledge of good and evil* cannot be separated from man’s freedom to decide to use the particular potencies of his bodily drives or from rightfully owning property. After the fall, both of these become the guarantee and the exterior manifestations of man’s autonomy. Third, the *will to ownership* is essentially identical with the will to know good and evil and to be responsible for one’s own bodily fruitfulness. Here von Balthasar emphasizes that man and woman differ. On the one hand, the man must toil to gain external possessions⁶⁶ and acts more possessively than the woman in sexual matters. On the other hand, the woman, as the mother of all living,⁶⁷ enjoys a position that places her above the man.⁶⁸

After the fall, the sexual relationship between man and woman looks towards Christ for Redemption. In section 9.2.1, it was underscored that Christ was already disponible to redeem man at Creation. After the fall and during the Old Covenant, he also stands ready to redeem the man-woman relationship, and thus, to found marriage as a sacrament. Adrienne adds that ultimately both the paradisaal and post-paradisaal states of man and

⁶¹Cf. Sc, 62: “Gottes Absicht, als er die Menschen als Mann und Weib schuf und sie segnete, war es, sie in dieses trinitarische Gebet einzubeziehen. Durch die Sünde haben sie sich dieses Gebetes beraubt; jetzt müssen sie sich ein eigenes Gebet erfinden und ertasten, denn sie wollten selber Zentrum ihrer Erkenntnis sein und ihr Zentrum nicht in Gott haben.”

⁶²Cf. Sc, 92: “Jetzt werden sie eine Gemeinschaft gegen Gott gründen, ein Ich-Du, bei dem möglichst viel für mich und dich heraus schauen soll, und gegen Gott hin werden sie einen Vorhang ziehen.”

⁶³Cf. NB XII, 151-152: “Und nur im Bekenntnis, in der Beichte, als Gnade des Herrn und als Nacktheit vor Gott, läßt sich die leibliche Nacktheit des Paradieses zurück gewinnen.” Adrienne’s insight that Adam and Eve try to reproduce their lost original unity through the sexual act, indicates how they were already inclined towards Christ’s Redemption of marriage and his gift of the Church into which the man-woman relationship would be grafted, united and blessed.

⁶⁴Cf. Gn 3, 16a: “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing...’”

⁶⁵Cf. Gn 3, 16b: “...yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.”

⁶⁶Cf. Gn 3, 17: “And to Adam he said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life...”

⁶⁷Cf. Gn 3, 20: “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

⁶⁸Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 92. [120].

woman find their full significance in the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ.⁶⁹

9.3 Incarnation and Redemption: Marriage in the Life of the Lord

After the fall, marriage looks towards God's Redemption. However, God does not come to redeem marriage simply by showering his grace down from Heaven; he becomes man. And in becoming man, he redeems marriage from within. Incarnated in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born in the embrace of the Holy Family, Jesus sanctified the marriage of Mary and Joseph by his holy presence. As he "increased in wisdom and in stature" (*Lk* 2, 52), Jesus gained a first-hand experience of living in a human family. During the three years of his "public life," he would teach a new understanding of marriage that was to be founded in him and not on the Old Covenant understanding of marriage. On the Cross, from his side, the Lord gave birth to the Church. At the same time, in giving Mary and John to each other in an act that is bridal and virginal, he redeemed marriage, instituted it and inserted it into his union with his newly begotten Church.

9.3.1 The Holy Family

Christ's Redemption of marriage begins in the realm of the marriage between Joseph and Mary and in the womb of the Holy Family. Mary's Yes to God, spoken to the archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation sets everything in motion. Adrienne writes that at the Annunciation, it becomes clear that Mary has always lived in a state of active readiness and disponibility to receive the Son of God into her womb. Mary gives herself over totally to God. In return, she is blessed with an abundance of spiritual and bodily fruitfulness, even though she is Virgin. Adrienne emphasizes that the sanctification of matrimonial love is a result of Mary's assent to God, an assent that is fundamentally spiritual but that results in bodily fruitfulness. It is Mary's Yes that opens the way for the Incarnation and Redemption. Because Mary's assent to God is given so completely, with her whole body and spirit, Adrienne asserts that the Virgin Mother is the perfect archetype of the encounter between man and woman in the Lord.⁷⁰ When a man and woman consent to marry, each gives

⁶⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 155: "Das ganze Geschlechtverhältnis in der Zeit zwischen Paradies und Erlösung in Christus ist ein Verhältnis auf diese Erlösung hin. [...] Sowohl der paradiesische wie der nachparadiesische Zustand der Geschlechter erhält durch die Ankunft Christi seinen vollen Sinn." With this statement, one could draw the conclusion that Adrienne affirms that Christ would have become flesh whether or not Adam and Eve had sinned. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 188. [232-233]. Von Balthasar writes that with the Incarnation, God did not simply shower his grace on man, but he had to do something greater to overcome man's guilt: he himself became the model of redeemed marriage: "So brachte der neue Adam die Erfüllung von viel höher herab, als der erste sie erhalten hatte: er sandte nicht nur Gnade auf das Irdische herab, er kam als die menschengewordene Gnade Gottes, als erdegeordener Himmel. Er glied sich nicht nur der urbildlichen Ehe an, sondern wurde selber zum Urbild derselben."

⁷⁰Cf. *I K*, 323: "Und die Mutter ist nicht nur leibliche Trägerin des Sohnes, sie ist Trägerin seines irdischen Schicksals, ja Trägerin des himmlischen Beschlusses, der Welt den Sohn zu schenken. [...] Sie trug den Sohn leiblich, aber ihr Leib war dadurch den Glauben willig. Und wenn der Sohn durch sie Mensch wird, dann ebenso sehr durch ihren Glauben als durch ihren Leib. [...] Aber indem sie im Sohn, in dem Sinn, daß sie alles in den Dienst schenkt. Aber indem sie im Sohn ihre Weiblichkeit findet, nimmt sie zugleich alle Generationen mit, die hinter ihr liegen: Männer wie Frauen. Sie verkörpert im Grunde als Einzige das Vollkommene des vorhergehenden Verses: die Begegnung beider im Herrn. Diese vollkommene Begegnung wird dadurch erreicht, daß der Sohn Gottes ihr in ihrem Leibe begegnet." Jesus dwells bodily in the womb of

oneself over to the other, body and spirit, in imitation of Mary who gives herself so perfectly and completely to her eschatological Spouse. In imitating Mary's all-embracing assent, Christian spouses open themselves to God's blessing of bodily and spiritual fecundity. Hence, all forms of bodily and spiritual fruitfulness are modeled after Mary.⁷¹

Conceived without sin, Mary lives forth from the same sinless, paradisaical reality of the first man and woman where marriage and virginity were completely compatible. Thus, like Adam and Eve, Mary sees no contradiction between marriage and virginity and, thus, her conception of Jesus and her virginity.⁷² Moreover, Adrienne explains how already in the womb of Mary, the presence of Jesus shapes and nourishes her spiritual life. It is as if Mary nourishes the Child physically, and he, in turn, nourishes her spiritually.⁷³ The Son's prayer is inseparable from Mary's to the point that the Magnificat can be seen as a prayer of the Son speaking through the vessel of his Virgin Mother.⁷⁴

Mary during the nine months of pregnancy. It appears that it is a perfect bodily encounter of the Lord with the Immaculate One. However, does that mean the virginal-bodily encounter between Jesus and Mary would become less perfect after Jesus is born? Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering*, 203. No, because as Matro writes: "As Mary is ever more fully merged into the Lord's mission of suffering, so is she increasingly a sign of His body. Because the person of Mary most strikingly reflects the Son's disposition of receptivity before the Father, the Son will use her as a lens through which He will see the potential purity of sinners." She becomes more a *sign* of the Lord's body, but also, she becomes more *Body*, that is, the Body of the Church. This will culminate in Mary's Assumption, body and soul into heaven. She was so united bodily and spiritually to the Lord during the years of his life, that it is imperative that she be united with him not only spiritually, but also bodily in Heaven.

⁷¹Cf. *MH*, 184. [170]. Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 49: "Il matrimonio cristiano è indissolubile in quanto è partecipazione alla totalità irreversibile della dedizione di Cristo all'Chiesa, che nella sua protocellula, Maria, ha il perfetto soggetto di recezione di questo amore e di questa rivelazione. ■ 'sì' incondizionato e immacolato della Vergine è la garanzia della reciprocità della sposa nei confronti del Cristospo."

⁷²Cf. *MH*, 60-61. [55-56]: "Wenn sie dem Engel sagt: 'Ich kenne keinen Mann,' so schließt sie damit im Hinblick auf die Verheißung des Engels, die offensichtlich nicht auf eine Verbindung mit Joseph hinweist, jede andere menschliche Beziehung aus. Man kann aber auch nicht sagen, daß sie von Joseph mit Gewißheit Kinder erwartet habe. Sie hätte auch damit---wie mit einem Gelübde der Jungfräulichkeit---vorgreifend etwas festgelegt."

⁷³Certainly, Mary also nourishes Jesus spiritually. No doubt, she would pray to God in thanksgiving, but also for understanding. To receive the Son of God into one's womb is no ordinary event. After Jesus' birth, she would have taught him prayers. Cf. A. von Speyr, *Bei Gott und bei den Menschen, Gebete* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1992), 79-81. *With God and with Men, Prayers* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995) Transl. Adrian Walker, 95-98. Hereafter cited as *BG*. In the "Prayer of Mary Expecting the Child," A. gives an example of Mary's prayer during pregnancy: "My child, my God, I adore you. You are yet too small to understand my fear, and yet, you are my God. You are the God for whom we have waited for so long and who has chosen me to be your mother." For spouses expecting a child, the time of pregnancy can be a time of much spiritual enriching, not only for the spousal union, but also for the child. Already while the baby is in the womb, the parents can begin to pray with him.

⁷⁴Cf. *MH*, 57. [52]: "Und jetzt, da der Sohn in ihr ist, ist ihr Gebet mehr denn je untrennbar vom Gebet ihres Sohnes. Sie ist die Meditation ihres Sohnes. Ihr Gebet gehört dem Sohn und kann vom seinen nicht geschieden werden. Beider Gebet fließt ineinander über, wie sie in diesem Augenblick körperlich eins sind. Und wenn es menschlich vielleicht auch die Mutter ist, die die Worte und Gedankengänge formt, da der Sohn mit seinen Lippen noch kein menschliches Gebet sprechen kann, so ist der Inhalt dieses Gebetes noch durch den Sohn bestimmt und gefüllt. Er gibt ihren Gedanken und Worten das Leben."

Joseph, unlike Mary, is subject to original sin. And unlike Mary, he cannot help but see a contradiction between marriage and virginity. His giving over of his sexual generative powers to God is a renunciation which he carries out with the whole strength of his manhood.⁷⁵ Rather than being weakened by his renunciation, his manhood is strengthened. He chooses marriage freely and looks forward to guiding his new family as husband and father. Certainly, he is no eunuch; he stands ready to give his whole body over in service.⁷⁶ Joseph is a manly model of patience for all husbands and fathers, especially during those times of married life when spouses, for one good reason or another, abstain from sexual relations. Joseph exemplifies what it means to have control over one's desires and one's body. In his self-mastery, he shows that he is capable to take on his role of headship and of leadership in the family.⁷⁷

Adrienne underlines that Mary and Joseph live a true marriage. Nonetheless, they follow the call of God to live the evangelical counsels.⁷⁸ Both Mary and Joseph bring a particular emphasis to marriage lived within the realm of the counsels. *Obedience* is especially underlined in Mary. Her fundamental attitude of obedience opens the way for everything else to unfold. Joseph's own obedience is encompassed in Mary's. On the other hand, *poverty* is especially emphasized in Joseph. Because of the nature of his carpentry trade, his earnings will never be great. Together, Mary and Joseph live the vow of *virginity*. However, each lives it in his own way. Mary is totally open to God and perfectly unsullied. Joseph lives virginity by subordinating his initial understanding and desires to God's directives.⁷⁹

As the Child Jesus grows up in the loving embrace of the Holy Family, he is nourished both physically and spiritually. Jesus learns the nature of human love from his Mother. By her own example, Mary shows Jesus what constitutes love of neighbor. Later,

⁷⁵One may argue that Mary's virginity is not a renunciation since she lives forth from the paradisaical synthesis of bodily and spiritual fruitfulness, where the state of virginity (which was the only state) required no renunciation. However, although Mary would not have had to renounce her own body in the same way as consecrated religious and priests, she would have had to increasingly give herself over to God as she was brought more and more into the mission of the Son. This is especially clear in the Gospels. At the finding of the Child Jesus in the temple, at Cana and at the Cross, Mary is reminded that her Son is to be given over to the whole world and that she must give over the fruit of her womb for the salvation of the world.

⁷⁶Cf. *MH*, 62, [57].

⁷⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 33: "Er braucht etwas von der Geduld der Frau im Schwangerschaft, um darüber nicht selbst zu verfügen, etwas von der Geduld Josephs, von der Überlegenheit des geistigen Menschen, der auch seine Zeugungsfunktion als eine seiner Frau ja nicht als seiner Funktionen in seiner Beherrschung behält, denn er will sich seiner Frau ja nicht als ein Zeugungsapparat erweisen, sondern als der führende Mann hingeben, der zuerst die Führung über sich selbst haben muß, wenn er andere führen will."

⁷⁸Cf. *MH*, 67, [61]: "Maria lebt mit Joseph in einer wahren Ehe. Aber der Geist der Gelübde ist in dieser Ehe verwirklicht, sowohl auf seiten Marias wie auf seiten Josephs. Sie leben beide seit ihrer Verlobung in einem besonderen Gehorsam zu Gott---sie hätten sonst nicht beide ihr Jawort zu ihrem einmaligen Beruf gegeben---und sie leben in der Kontemplation---sonst wäre nicht beiden der Engel erschienen."

⁷⁹Cf. *MH*, 70-71, [64-65]. Although A. sustains that the Holy Family lived the evangelical counsels, this does not mean that families are also called to live the counsels in the same way as the Holy Family did. Certainly, spouses are to be obedient to God's commandments and precepts, to strive towards holiness and to live chastely and simply without amassing great riches. However, A. makes it clear in her writings that there are two distinct states of life. The state of marriage is excellent and holy in itself with its own emphasis on procreation, fidelity and mutual sanctification.

when the Lord will make the command to “love one’s neighbor,” he will already have lived this commandment in his relationship to Mary and Joseph. The Son, who has perfect knowledge, puts this aside in order to have man’s experience of love outside of Paradise. The Child Jesus, thus, learns from Mary the concrete things of daily life. She teaches him to walk, to eat and to speak. Adrienne marvels how Mary teaches Jesus speech with her own vocabulary; to the Word, she teaches the human word. He utters what he has learned and it becomes divine Word.⁸⁰ Mary also teaches Jesus the law and the prophets. Adrienne summarizes: “Mary, who knows no original sin, and Joseph, who is redeemed from it, form the surroundings of the growing Son. From both of them, he experiences what it means to respond to his grace.”⁸¹

The dwelling place of the Holy Family remains free from sin. Outside the house, however, the Child Jesus experiences sin’s consequences.⁸² Perhaps, Joseph is not always treated justly for the hard work he performs. Mary, too, experiences the harshness of daily life. When Jesus sees these injustices, he knows first hand that holy and virtuous living does not always guarantee fair treatment by others. Out of experience, therefore, he comes to know that an innocent person can help to bear guilt, but “that such bearing receives its value and meaning only from his redemptive mission to bear all sins.”⁸³

9.3.2 The Incarnate Savior

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus taught the foundations of Christian marriage. Although marriage already existed in Paradise and under the Old Covenant, Jesus came to reveal what it means to live marriage in him. He taught the importance of *purity of heart* and lived it himself in every way. Indeed, he is the totally pure man. The Lord longs that others are pure as well so that his Father may see *them* in the same way that the Father sees *him*.⁸⁴ Jesus also taught that marriage is *indissoluble*. Adrienne observes that God binds together in everything he does. God is covenant and Jesus Christ is covenant incarnate. Therefore, through the Son all the sacraments bind Christians to God. When man and woman are united in matrimony, they acknowledge the divine form of the covenant and place the whole of their married life under God who alone determines its ultimate form.⁸⁵

⁸⁰In *Chapter 10*, it will be shown how parents can imitate Mary and Joseph’s teaching to the Son. When parents teach prayers and truths of the faith to their child, certainly the child does not always fully comprehend what he hears or what he utters in prayer. Nonetheless, a seed is planted that will grow into tree and later bear much fruit as the child grows in understanding of the faith just as Jesus grew in “wisdom and in stature” (*Lk 2, 52*).

⁸¹*MH*, 97-98. [87-88].

⁸²It is interesting to note that already as a little boy, Jesus begins to experience the effects of sin. Throughout his life, especially during the three years of his public ministry, Jesus will encounter sin again and again. With each encounter, he endures an experience of distancing from his Father. As was seen in *Passion von Innen* and as will be briefly reviewed in the section 9.3.2, at the time of his Passion, the Lord’s suffering in the form of estrangement from those around him increases to the point that he experiences Godforsakenness. Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering*, 150-151.

⁸³*MH*, 98. [89].

⁸⁴Cf. *B*, 96-97.

⁸⁵Cf. *Ma*, 448.

At the wedding at Cana (*Jn* 1, 1-12), the Lord and his Mother inaugurate the mystery that will eventually become the sacrament of marriage.⁸⁶ Their presence at Cana is a blessing for that particular wedding and for all marriages to come. By giving orders to the servants, Jesus and Mary manifest that they belong there and, indeed, play an important role in the marriage at Cana. Adrienne explains that Mary's *fiat* to be the Mother of the Son of God contains and encompasses the consent of the newlyweds at Cana. Furthermore, in the same way that Mary must continue to give her consent anew throughout her life and the life of the whole Church, the grace of marriage also is not relinquished on the wedding day, but it enfolds the whole life of the married couple, the life of their children, the children's children and so on. It is Mary's consent, therefore, that opens the floodgates of grace.⁸⁷

When the Lord performs the miracle at Cana, he allows the normal everyday things to remain. He does not conjure up heavenly wine, but transforms what is given to him. In a similar way, the Lord transforms Christian marriage. In the liturgical rite, spouses come before Christ with their ordinary experiences, bodies, sufferings, joys, strengths and weaknesses. They offer all these to him so that he may "seal and strengthen [their] love in the presence of the Church's minister and [the] community." Christ has consecrated them in baptism, now with marriage he "enriches and strengthens [the spouses] by a special sacrament so that [they] may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity."⁸⁸

On the Cross, Jesus instituted the sacrament of matrimony when he "gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (*Eph* 5, 25b-27). In his Passion, Jesus reveals his profound love for his body, the Church, by giving his life for her. At the same time, Jesus invites all Christian spouses to participate in this mystery: the mystery of his love for his body, the Church. In her meditations on Christ's Passion, Adrienne gives a number of penetrating insights into Christ's love for his own human body. By contemplating Christ's love for his own body, Christian spouses, in the spirit of *Ephesians* 5, can be led to a deeper understanding of how they should love each other.

As the Passion begins to unfold, Jesus knows that his time on earth is coming to an end. With a penetrating gaze, Adrienne traces "from within" [*von innen*] the Lord's experiences of his body as he goes forth in his Passion. She describes Jesus's foreboding as he must take leave of his body that his Father begot and his Mother formed.⁸⁹ Jesus must also take leave of human bonds. Increasingly, he experiences the effects of sin as an

⁸⁶Cf. *Jo* 1, 215. [167-168]: "Ihr Beisammensein an diesem Fest ist der Anfang und Ursprung eines Geheimnisses, das später münden wird in das christliche Sakrament der Ehe. Darum stehen sie sich der Herr und seine Mutter in diesem Augenblick auch als Mann und Frau gegenüber." We will look more closely at the roles of Jesus and Mary at Cana in Chapter 10.

⁸⁷Cf. *Jo* 1, 216-217. [168-169]: "Bei diesem Überfließen der Gnade über das Sakramentale hinaus ist nun aber die Anwesenheit der Mutter entscheidend. Ihr ganzes, vollwertiges Jawort ist es, was---das Jawort der Eheleute tragend und einhüllend---diesen Überfluß der Gnade entsiegelt."

⁸⁸*Rite of Marriage* (During Mass). Cited from: John F. Kippley, *Marriage Is for Keeps, Wedding Edition with Marriage Rite and Readings* (Cincinnati: Foundation for the Family, 1994) 136.

⁸⁹Cf. *Pa*, 9-10. [11].

estrangement from all those around him.⁹⁰ Thus, as he nears the Cross, he feels more and more alienated from his own body and from all human bonds. At the Last Supper, when Jesus institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist, Adrienne notes that Jesus stands ‘beside’ his body even though the bread contains him totally.⁹¹ The Lord gives his body to the Church at the beginning of his Passion so that she can suffer along with him, participating in the Cross. Jesus will die estranged from everyone, but he desires that the members of his newly forming Church have his Eucharist to remind them of his presence in their lives.⁹²

Finally, giving himself over on the Cross, Jesus shows the depth of his love for his Bride the Church. In him, immense suffering and infinite love come together. In this context, Adrienne compares womanly birth pangs and manly begetting to Jesus’ suffering on the Cross.⁹³ On the one hand, with every ounce of her strength, the woman in labor brings forth new life. She resembles the Lord’s total and perfect giving over of his body and spirit. On the other hand, in the words that he speaks from the Cross, Jesus witnesses to the potency of his begetting Spirit. As he pours himself out for his Bride, the Son experiences intensely how sin can destroy the body, this beautiful work of Father’s Creation. He sees how well it is made; now it is being destroyed.⁹⁴

9.3.3 Mary and John under the Cross

Dying on the Cross, Jesus gives Mary and John to each other (*Jn* 19, 26-27). With these two acts, the Lord institutes and blesses the sacrament of marriage.⁹⁵ Adrienne explains that both virginal and bridal, Mary and John are situated beyond individual sacramental marriage in the realm of the Church that is also virginal and bridal. Precisely because Mary and John’s union is virginal and bridal, all marriages can draw grace from it and look to them as a model of matrimonial giving and receiving. Adrienne explains that in receiving the Lord’s blessing at the foot of the Cross, Mary and John are the “archetype

⁹⁰Cf. *Pa*, 12-15. [14-19]. Cf. *Pa*, 95. [107]. Utilizing metaphors that draw on the marriage relationship, Adrienne describes the estrangement between Peter and the Lord that Peter brings on by his three-fold denial. A. compares Jesus’ experience of Peter’s denial to that of a divorced man who meets his wife again after many years. He knows every secret of her body, but she no longer belongs to him. Likewise, the Lord knew Peter as a follower; now Peter has denied that he belongs to him. With the cock’s crow (*Mt* 26, 75), Peter immediately experiences remorse over his sin. In this dark moment, he already has opened himself to the Lord’s forgiving grace that will be the fruit of the Cross. Peter’s bitter tears open the possibility for reconciliation.

⁹¹Cf. *Pa*, 19-20. [24-25]: “Neben ihm liegend, aber ihn vollkommen enthaltend, ist dieses Brot sein Leib geworden, und das ausgesprochene Wort ist der Kirche geschenkt, und die Kirche wird im Verteilen des Brotes an ihre Glieder, im Verschenden seines Leibes sich selber zu seinem Leib umformen.”

⁹²Cf. *Pa*, 24-25. [29-30].

⁹³Cf. *Pa*, 41-42. [46-47]: “A man desires to pray. His kneeling down is the birth; the prayer itself is the begetting. Begetting contains all the potency, birth the action that makes it visible. Only *one* seed matures in the mother’s womb. [...] The words of the Lord on the Cross are acts of begetting, male begetting, each time the Holy Spirit is the great begetter.” In a number of places, A. notes that in the conjugal act, the man in giving himself over to the woman, resembles the Lord who pours himself out on the Cross.

⁹⁴Cf. *Pa*, 106. [118-119].

⁹⁵Cf. *KW*, 43. [33]: “In diesem Kreuzessegen ist zugleich der Ehesegen gestiftet. Der Herr hat am Kreuz Mann und Frau zusammengegeben, aber in einer kirchlichen Tat, die zunächst souveräne Tat des Hauptes der Kirche and der Kirche selbst ist.”

couple" [*Urpaar*] of marriage as Adam and Eve once were. With the Lord's words from the cross, human relationships are newly formed in the dying Son.⁹⁶

One may ask: Why are Mary and John considered an "archetype couple" for marriage? Even though they were given to each other by Christ, they were not married to each other in the strict sense and they had no natural children. Because Mary and Joseph were married to each other and were the parents of Jesus, would not their union be a more appropriate archetype for Christian marriage? Mary and John are the "archetype couple" for marriage because in Mary's virginal, bodily and universal fruitfulness and in John's virginal priesthood, they most fully represent the virginal, bridal and universal fruitfulness of Christ's gift on the Cross. Therefore, although the Christ-Church relationship is the *analogatum princeps* that all marriages strive to imitate (*Eph* 5, 21-33), Mary and John are the *Urpaar*. Because Mary, like the Church in her essence, is spotless, fecund and totally given over to the Lord, she is the one who most fully fulfills Paul's words in *Ephesians* 5. Moreover, because John stands *in persona Christi* and because he was specifically chosen by Christ to take his Mother into his home, he can represent Christ in a way that no other man can.⁹⁷ Even though Joseph is considered a greater saint than John in the Church, as a priest who carries out his ministry *in persona Christi*, John represents Christ in a way that Joseph cannot. Mary and Joseph remain an important model for marriage, as noted in

⁹⁶Cf. KW, 39-40. [30-31]: "Das Paar wird aus dem Kreuzeswort des Herrn geboren. Es wird dadurch irgendwie zu einem Urpaar, so wie Adam und Eva Urpaar waren. In ihm werden die menschlichen Beziehungen neu gestaltet durch den sterbenden Sohn." Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 234. [189]. Von Balthasar explains that the virginal grace of the Cross surpasses both the communal character and the fruitfulness of paradisaal marriage. Von Balthasar notes that we are speaking of "die unmittelbare Ergießung der innergöttlichen Fruchtbarkeit selbst durch das 'verbundene Werkzeug' der Menschheit Christi. Und diese Fruchtbarkeit ist nunmehr eine vollkommen jungfräuliche: einmal weil die Wiederherstellung der Jungfräulichkeit Adams ist, aber darüber hinaus, weil sie Sühne sein muß für die durch die Sünde verlorene Jungfräulichkeit des paradiesischen Standes und zuletzt und zühöchst, weil sie als unmittelbar göttliche Fruchtbarkeit nicht gebunden sein kann an einen partikulären weiblichen Schoß, sondern zum Schoß nur die Katholizität der Kirche aller Erlösten haben kann." Cf. P. J. Elliot, *What God Has Joined...The Sacramentality of Marriage*, 26-27. Elliot writes that the nuptial meaning of Jesus' death on the Cross is seen in two ways: "(1) Christ, Priest and Victim, dies out of love for the bride he has *already* espoused in the Incarnation, cleansing and perfecting her by his death; and (2) Christ, Priest and Victim is espoused to his Church *in the act of self-immolation*, when the Church comes forth from his pierced side." Elliot explains that both meanings come together at the heart of this "great mystery." The event of the Cross is both historical and supernatural and therefore cannot be understood simply by interpreting it as human nuptial process (i.e. Jewish customs). In referring to Adrienne's reflections on marriage in *Kreuzeswort*, Elliot writes: "Ultimately, the deeper nuptial meanings of Calvary are accessible only to a true mystic." Moreover, E. explains that the birth of the Church is already prepared in Mary before the Cross: "Therefore, in her Immaculate Conception and in the Incarnation itself, Mary includes in herself the origin of the Church from creation and from Israel, the life of the Church espoused to God in the union of Grace, and the destiny of the Church, the celestial Sion, taken to himself by the Bridegroom in his eternal bridal chamber. Past, present and future meet in the 'woman' on Calvary, in the dramatic change of her role from Mother of Jesus Christ to that of the mystical ecclesial spouse."

⁹⁷It is noteworthy that the "two Johns" in the Gospels have important roles in the eschatological wedding of the Bridegroom (Jesus) and the Bride (Mary-Church). John the Baptist represents the *paraninfo*, the one who would accompany the bridegroom to the bride's house before the wedding. He comes before the Lord to prepare the way for the eschatological wedding (*Mk* 1, 7-8). John, the apostle and Evangelist, is the one who accompanies the Bride (Mary) and brings her into his home (*Jn* 19, 26-27).

subsection 9.3.1, but Mary and John are the “archetype couple.”⁹⁸

Receiving the sacrament of matrimony from the Lord, the Church takes over the responsibility of leading spouses to live holy and fruitful marriages. In turn, man and woman take responsibility by participating in the Church’s spiritual life thereby allowing their union to be enriched by the sacramental grace flowing from the Cross. Thus, the marriage union of man and woman is one of obedience to the Church, and ultimately, to the Lord. Spouses can never forget that the Lord’s words are spoken from the Cross.⁹⁹ Along with the experiences of joy, pleasure and happiness, spouses will also sometimes experience difficulties. In this way, they experience that fruitfulness and suffering are often joined together.

9.3.4 The Birth of the Bride

On the Cross, Jesus not only gives birth to Church, but also he joins himself to her, making her his Bride in an infinitely fruitful act. Adrienne writes that in forming the Church, the Lord has his Mother in view. Just as Mary once formed the Lord from her organs, now the Son gives birth to the Church fashioning her in the image of his Mother.¹⁰⁰ As an archetype of the Church, Mary is not always able to fully comprehend the depths of the mysteries into which the Lord leads her. Adrienne describes Mary’s life as a “losing and finding again of the Son.” For example, she “loses” the Child Jesus at twelve years old, but “finds” the Lord at Cana.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, precisely in not comprehending everything, the Church allows herself, like Mary, to be led by the Lord deeper into his love.¹⁰²

Although she is completely pristine at the Cross, and remains pure in her supernatural nature, the Church must be continually purified and sanctified in her members. Adrienne points out that especially through the sacraments of baptism, confession and the Eucharist, the Church’s members are purified by the Lord, thereby becoming instruments

⁹⁸Just as Joseph has a true manliness about him, John embodies a masculine love as well. John not only possesses a Marian receptivity to the Lord, but also a masculinity that allows him to be close to him without any kind of disorder. Later, he will have this same chaste “masculine receptivity” when he will take Mary into his home. Cf. *Jo I*, 60. [48].

⁹⁹Cf. *KW*, 45-46. [34-35]: “Die Beziehung von Mann und Frau wird geadelt und erhöht, indem sie Anteil erhält am geistigen Leben der Kirche; ihre Fruchtbarkeit soll leben von der kirchlichen Fruchtbarkeit, kraft eines Gehorsams, der durch die Kirche hindurch an den Herrn geht. Es ist aber Wort vom Kreuz.”

¹⁰⁰Cf. *Pa*, 78. [88]. Adrienne compares the mystery of the generation of the Church to the conjugal act: “Manches von der Beziehung des Herrn zur Kirche läßt sich nur am Beispiel der ehelichen Beziehungen erläutern. Den Samen, den der Mann der Frau gibt, hat er auf sie hin gesammelt. Irgendwo aber hat er ihn auch der Frau entnommen, denn er stammt ja von einer Frau. Das ist erst recht wahr bei Maria, die jungfräuliche Mutter ist und nachher Braut.”

¹⁰¹Cf. *HI*, 30-31.

¹⁰²Cf. *HI*, 11. A good example of the non-comprehending Church being led more profoundly into God’s love would be the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*. Paul VI had asked a number of theologians to help him discern better the Church’s understanding of human sexuality. The majority of them recommended that the Church change her teaching. Instead, Paul VI reiterated the Church’s teaching on the importance of spouses’ complete openness to the gift of human life. Without knowing the consequences of his defense of conjugal love, Paul VI was guided by the Holy Spirit to make the promulgation. With the papacy of John Paul II, the mysteries of conjugal sexuality have been more fully comprehended. The Church has been led from partial comprehension to deeper understanding in love. To be led deeper into love, she must first acknowledge that she does not comprehend everything.

of sanctification for the whole Church.¹⁰³ In building up the Body of Christ through the gift of his Eucharist,¹⁰⁴ the Lord, the Bridegroom, actually draws the Church, his Bride, to himself, pouring himself out so that he may fill her up with his grace.¹⁰⁵ For her part, the Church allows herself to be defined by the Lord's Eucharist. When believers receive Holy Communion with the same fervor and burning love that the Lord manifests in giving himself over to his Church, they truly allow themselves to be molded by him.¹⁰⁶ By accepting the Lord's invitation and by participating in the humiliation of the Cross and the Eucharist, the Church arrives at full possession of the Lord's love.¹⁰⁷

The Christian spouse models him or herself on the Lord who gives himself over in every way to the Church. It was shown earlier how the Lord loved his body because it was begotten by the Father, formed in his Mother's womb and enabled him to carry out his mission of Redemption. Christ loves his body because it carries out a service. Indeed, following the Lord's example, each person's body is meant for service, but also *mission*, a mission that is rooted in *the Mission*: the sending of the Son by the Father for man's Redemption. Thus, the spouse is to love one's own body and the other's body in order to give glory to the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the spouse's care for the body (one's own and the other's) is similar to the care the Lord has bestowed on the Church and is included in it. Consequently, the Christian knows that his love for the body is in order when it is placed entirely within the Lord's love for his Church.¹⁰⁸

9.4 Church and Sacrament: Marriage in the Life of the Church

With the Lord's sacrifice of himself to the Father in the Holy Spirit on the Cross, marriage was instituted in Christ definitively. To be instituted in Christ, however, means to be inserted into the Christ-Church relationship. In this section, the foundational, theological aspects of marriage as a sacrament of the Church are examined. Through the power of the

¹⁰³Cf. *Ep*, 190-191. [231-232].

¹⁰⁴Cf. *Ep*, 141-142. [171-172].

¹⁰⁵Cf. *Ep*, 62. [74-75]: "Aber der Sohn, der die Kirche gegründet hat, hat diese Kirche zum Leib, und so nimmt er ihre Fülle in sich auf, um sie in ihm sich erfüllen zu lassen. So erscheint im Gleichnis des Leibes das andere Gleichnis, das von Braut und Bräutigam: der Bräutigam ist über der Braut, aber sie an sich ziehend, um sie in sich zu erfüllen, dadurch, daß er sich in ihr erfüllt, indem er seine ganze Kraft in sie ausgießt." Cf. *HI*, 43. Here, Adrienne calls the Eucharist a mystical wedding: "Es gibt in der Eucharistie eine mystische Vermählung zwischen dem Herrn und der Kirche, bei der der Herr ihr seine Substanz gibt."

¹⁰⁶Cf. *HI*, 42-43.

¹⁰⁷Cf. *HI*, 47: "Diese Einladung zum Abstieg vom Libanon ist die dauernde Aufforderung des Herrn zur Teilnahme am Kreuz, an seiner Verdemütigung; nur durch Demütigungen kann die Liebe der Kirche in den Vollbesitz der Liebe des Herrn gelangen. Er läßt sie ein, herunterzukommen, und zugleich zeigt er ihr, wie sehr er auf sie angewiesen ist, ja wie berauschend sie für ihn ist, wie unentbehrlich, da sie allein ihn erfüllen kann."

¹⁰⁸Cf. *Ep*, 194. [236]. It may appear that when it comes to care for the other's body, *Eph* 5, 21-33 focuses mainly on the husband who is to love his wife as "Christ loved the Church" (v. 25), "sanctify her" (v. 26), and to love his wife as his own body (v. 28). However, v. 33 notes: "let the wife see that she respects her husband." She respects her husband, not only by respecting his body, but also her own. For example, she would not want to harm her body by using anything that thwarts her God-given bodily fruitfulness. Her love for her husband, that encompasses loving him completely, body and spirit, also includes the love she must have for her own body and her body's fertility.

sacrament of marriage, man and woman are bound to each other and to God in an irrevocable covenant. This sacramental covenant is a source and catalyst of much grace for the man-woman union and for the Church.

9.4.1 The Sacramentality and Fruitfulness of Marriage

In the sacrament of matrimony, Adrienne explains that each spouse gives his or her *consent* or “Yes-word” [*Jawort*] in the spirit of the other. In this, they imitate Mary who gives her Yes in the spirit of God and not in her own spirit. By consenting in the spirit of the other, each spouse acknowledges that the final guarantee of fidelity lies in the spirit of the beloved, and not in one’s own spirit. To consent in one’s own spirit would be to affirm one’s own sins and weaknesses. But to consent in the other is a consent *to* and *in* love.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, it is clear that spouses must give their consent not only in the other, but also in *the Other*, Christ Jesus.¹¹⁰ They know that marriage is a difficult endeavor that one cannot live without God’s continual sanctifying grace.

Moreover, Adrienne underlines that the consent of the spouses is *irrevocable* [*unwiderruflich*]. Man and woman are to enter into marriage with the full knowledge and understanding that their union is to last for their whole life together, that is, until the death of one of the partners.¹¹¹ Precisely because many situations and difficulties arise in marriage,

¹⁰⁹Cf. *MH*, 14-15. [14]: “Auf menschliche Verhältnisse übertragen ist ihr Jawort wie eine vorläufige Verlobung mit dem Geist zu nachfolgender Ehe hin. So sagt denn auch Maria im Geiste Gottes ja, und nicht in ihrem eigenen Geist, wie auch in der christlichen Ehe der eine Partner im Geiste des anderen und nicht in eigenen Geist das Jawort spricht. Er sieht nicht den eigenen Geist als die letzte Bürgschaft der Treue an (das wäre Selbstüberhebung und Selbstsucht), sondern in Liebe den Geist dessen, den er liebt.” With this insight, it is clear that each spouse must try to give oneself completely all the time. They cannot say to each other: “I give fifty percent and you give fifty percent; together we will have a complete marriage.” Marriage demands that each spouse gives a full effort. However, there are those times in marriage when, for one reason or another such as illness, difficulties at work or family tragedy, when one spouse is not able to give a hundred percent. At these times, the other spouse must try to compensate. Cf. *IK*, 323. Here, A. observes that every woman in her consent to marry imitates Mary’s *fiat*: “Sie hat sich durch ihr Jawort frei in diesen überragenden Ratshluß hineingefügt, in einer Anlehnung daran, wie jedes Weib, das dem Manne ja sagt, die ihr anvertraute Frucht trägt; und doch auf höherer Ebene, weil Marias Jawort nicht Ausdruck der Natur ist, sondern Glaubens.” Cf. *CIC*, 1057 §1: “Marriage is brought about through the consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons who are capable according to law of giving consent; no human power can replace this consent.”

¹¹⁰Cf. Carlo Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 11.36.183. Rocchetta clarifies that the spouses do not simply administer or receive the sacrament of marriage. They become what they celebrate and are a sign of the action of Christ and the Church. Indeed, in their celebration of the sacrament, they participate in the ministeriality of Christ and the Church. Furthermore, R. explains that the couple’s Yes to each other is also a Yes to Christ: “È come se l’uomo e la donna dicessero: ‘Sì, lo voglio, voglio che Cristo ci doni l’uno all’altra, che il nostro amore trascenda i suoi limiti terreni ed entri a far parte dell’amore stesso con cui Cristo ama la Chiesa e la Chiesa ama Cristo; voglio che il nostro legame partecipi all’unione escatologica che fa di Cristo e della Chiesa ‘un solo corpo’ (Ef 5, 23.30-31).” (p. 123)

¹¹¹Cf. *Chr*, 79. In a letter to a young woman who married while she was still quite young and immature A. explains that the choice she made is irrevocable and that the sacrament cannot be arbitrarily dissolved: “Die Hingebung war da, ohne daß Du richtig ja dazu gesagt hättest; Du hättest Deine Zustimmung vielleicht nie gegeben, wenn Du ihre Unwiderruflichkeit geahnt hättest. [...] Das Sakrament das Du empfangen hast, läßt sich nicht beliebig lösen, vielleicht hast Du es ja nicht in der Hauptsache als Sakrament angesehen, vielleicht war es Dir nur eine Begleiterscheinung Deiner Heiratslaune [...]” Cf. *CIC*, 1057 §2: “Matrimonial

it is imperative that the spouses know they are living their marriage irrevocably. On the wedding day, the many difficulties, that will no doubt arise during marriage, remain hidden. Nonetheless, each spouse, like one who makes vows to the consecrated life, must give him or herself over to the other completely and irrevocably.¹¹² Giving oneself irrevocably to the other for life establishes a foundation of trust that enables the couple to overcome difficulties with the help of God's grace.

Sometimes spouses do not give of each other irrevocably and the marriage ends in *divorce*. Adrienne explains that often egoism is at the heart of the matter: "The word sacrifice is not found in the dictionary of these married couples, they have no idea what it is and consequently do not give it any place in their law." Furthermore, these couples do not realize that family life should be a community in which each member has distinct roles. Family life is not a mere summation of the individual life of each member, but is a genuine sharing of each person's gifts, in such a way that in the end it is not entirely clear what each member brings to the family. It is really a growing in one another.¹¹³

Adrienne explains that often marriage failure is also due to inadequate upbringing. More and more frequently, the child receives much of his instruction and training outside the home. The more the child finds pleasures outside of family and home, the less he desires to be home with his family. When the child does spend some time with his family, he receives only physical nurturing such as food, clothes and shelter. Thus, home becomes a stopping point between outside activities. Not wanting to go against the current, parents allow their child to do what all the others seem to be doing.¹¹⁴

Another factor, that contributes to the dissolving of the family, is that parents see every activity of the child as an overcoming of some difficulty, in such a way that its achievement takes on the nature of competition. In effect, the child's performance alone becomes the most important aspect. As a result, other children try to follow examples, whether good or bad, that one has either imitated or avoided, to the point that the "humanity of the other child disappears behind the performance; it alone is important. The personal, inner becoming of the child receives no interior value." Consequently, one is left with mere "performance people," that reflects a form of complete egoism.¹¹⁵

Adrienne explains that spouses who live an egoistical marriage try to escape when the first difficulty arises. However, in marriage, true mending occurs only in real love. She emphasizes that young people must have the courage to recognize their situation and to learn, step by step, to truly live together in marriage. This requires much patience and mutual leniency. In so doing, married couples will find that competition and jealousy have no place in their life. Only God, who is the source of their love and the guide in all

consent is an act of the will by which a man and a woman, through an irrevocable [*foedere irrevocabili*] covenant, mutually give and accept each other in order to establish marriage."

¹¹²Cf. *Chr*, 144: "Die gleiche Verlässlichkeit muß auch der Wahl zur Ehe eignen; denn auch die Ehe soll ganz und unwiderruflich sein; sie birgt die gleichen echten Kriterien der Hingabe und der Verantwortung wie das Kloster."

¹¹³*Chr*, 106-107.

¹¹⁴*Chr*, 107-108.

¹¹⁵*Chr*, 108-109. Even though these words were written in 1940's, today, they ring true more than ever.

difficulties, should be given the highest place.¹¹⁶

Divorce does not merely effect one couple or one family, but also it weakens the Christ-Church unity and other marriages. Therefore, along with other couples, the one married couple carries the responsibility to maintain the unity of marriage. In a similar way to the priest who represents the whole Church and acts as vicar of Christ, the married person stands on behalf of the whole married state. What individual couples do will touch the whole state of marriage and ultimately Christ, upon whom the Church is founded.¹¹⁷

With the consent to marry, man and woman form a *covenant* [*Bindung*] or a new unity. Adrienne affirms that precisely in this new unity lies the special distinction of marriage: man and wife do not receive the grace of the sacrament individually, but as a new unity, a new community in God.¹¹⁸ As noted above, God the Son binds together in every sacrament; he embodies the sacraments in himself and binds because he himself is bond [*Bindung*].¹¹⁹ Adrienne describes the matrimonial covenant as actually “three bonds in one” where the spouses are bound to each other, but also, each individually and both together, to God.¹²⁰ It is clear that with the sacrament of baptism, each spouse is bound *individually* to God.¹²¹ However, it is noteworthy that while Adrienne affirms that the spouses are bound

¹¹⁶*Chr.*, 109-110.

¹¹⁷*Cf. B.*, 103: “Wer seine Frau entläßt, verletzt die ewige, göttliche Bindung, denn die Ehe wird jetzt innerhalb des Bundes Christi mit seiner Kirche geschlossen und ist wie eine Konkretisierung, eine Verwirklichungsform dieses Bundes. [...] Wer die Einheit der Ehe zerreißt, schwächt in einem bestimmten Sinne der Einheit Christi mit seiner Kirche, und weil ein Ehebund auch im Zusammenhang steht mit allen andern Ehen in der Kirche, gefährdet er auch diese: an der einen Stelle wird die Einheit zerrissen, und für die andern entsteht daraus die Versuchung, den Riß weiterzuführen.”

¹¹⁸*Cf. Jo I.*, 108. [88]: “Das Sakrament der Ehe hat seine Besonderheit und Differenzierung in der christlichen Weihe des natürlichen, geistigleiblichen Verhältnisses zwischen Mann und Frau. Aber gerade darin liegt auch der Ansatzpunkt ihrer überstömenden Unendlichkeit. Denn sie trifft ja nicht ein einzelnes Subjekt, sondern von Anfang an bereits eine lebedige Einheit von Ich und Du. Empfangen wird sie nicht von zwei einzelnen Menschen, sondern von einer neuen Gemeinschaft.” *Cf. C. Rocchetta, Il sacramento della coppia*, 64-65. Noting M.J. Scheeben’s important contribution in *Die Mysterion des Christentums*, Rocchetta writes that Scheeben correctly intuited that the supernatural is not imposed on the natural, but transcends it and recuperates it from within. In this mode, Rocchetta notes that the Church can say that the spouses participate in the sacrament of matrimony not so much as individuals, but as a couple united in a sacramental covenant. R. refers to *GS*, 48, but he notes that this point is made more explicitly in *FC*, 13: “The spouses participate in it as spouses, together, as a couple, so that the first and immediate effect of marriage (*res et sacramentum*) is not supernatural grace itself, but the Christian conjugal bond, a typically Christian communion of two persons because it represents the mystery of Christ’s incarnation and the mystery of his covenant.”

¹¹⁹*Cf. Ma.*, 447: “Wie verbindet Gott? Er verbindet im Sakrament. Und es ist, als würde der Sohn alle Sakramente in sich verkörpern und als Bindung, Bindeglied zwischen Gott dem Vater und den Menschen dienen. Und was der Vater durch ihn bindet, darf nicht getrennt werden. [...] Er bindet, weil er selber Bindung ist. [...] Er bindet uns durch jeden Sakramentenempfang. [...] Und er bindet auch in der Ehe. [...] Die Ehe entgeht diesem Gesetz der Bindung durch Gott nicht. [...] Der Herr selber, in dem ja alle Sakramente begründet sind, hat die Ehe eingesetzt in einer sakramentalen, nicht auflösbaren Form.”

¹²⁰*Cf. Chr.*, 63: “[...] denn das Ehesakrament bindet die Eheleute nicht nur untereinander, sondern es bindet sie jeden einzeln und beide zusammen an Gott [...]” Both spouses receive the grace of marriage as a couple when both are Catholics in good standing. The question of mixed marriages will be treated in subsection 9.4.2.

¹²¹*Cf. CCC*, no. 1272: “Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of belonging to Christ.”

to God in the sacrament of matrimony *as a couple*, she also underscores that there is an *individual* bond to God that is given with marriage that is to be distinguished from that which comes with baptism.¹²²

The grace or *fruitfulness* [*Fruchtbarkeit*] of marriage is analogous to trinitarian fruitfulness. Adrienne observes that just as the Holy Spirit is revealed at Pentecost as the fruit of the Son's return to the Father at the Ascension and is a new beginning for the Church, so too the child renews the love between man and woman.¹²³ Moreover, Adrienne explains that marital love reveals trinitarian "personal" love more than virginal consecrated love which emphasizes more God's essence.¹²⁴ Indeed, not only does true Christian married love show signs of imitating trinitarian love but also it participates in the exchange of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹²⁵

Adrienne writes that the spouses' mutual consent [*Jawort*] allows the grace of marriage to bring about the *sanctification* of each spouse's body and spirit and opens them to *supernatural* and *natural fruitfulness*.¹²⁶ Certainly, the grace of marriage brings about the

¹²²What is the exact nature of this individual bond to God that marriage brings with it? Adrienne does not go into details. It appears that it is not of a particular sacramental nature. Cf. CCC, 1121. Only the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and orders confer a sacramental *character* or "seal" that remains "for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated." Thus, in Adrienne's understanding the individual bond is encompassed within the spousal covenant. Even though man and woman are now married to each other, each maintains an individual, intimate relationship with God that is to be mutually respected. This will be discussed more in *Chapter 10*.

¹²³Cf. *Jo I*, 31. [28-29]: "Aber gleichsam (denn das alles ist Gleichnis) entsprechend der Übererfüllung der Rückkehr des Sohnes zum Vater, die sich im Unvermuteten der Fruchtbarkeit der ewigen Liebe als neuer Ursprung des Heiligen Geistes enthüllt, erscheint zwischen Mann und Weib das Kind. Das Kind ist nicht nur das, was die Liebe zwischen Mann und Frau zur ewigen Bewegung werden läßt, das scheinbar Vollendende erst zum wahren Ursprung umgestaltet, den Kreis, der sich zu schließen droht, in restlose Offenheit aufsprengt, das Kind erweist zugleich auch den Gnadencharakter der Liebe, in dem sich ihr göttlicher Ursprung anzeigt (denn Gott schenkt das Kind)..."

¹²⁴Cf. *St*, 73-74. [74]: "So offenbart die eheliche Liebe in der Kirche in einem ersten Aspekt stärker die personale Seite der innertrinitarischen Liebe, während die jungfräuliche Liebe zunächst stärker auf die Wesensseite derselben göttlichen Liebe verweist."

¹²⁵Cf. *St*, 81. [81]: "Das hindert nicht, daß im echten christlichen Eheleben überall die Spuren einer Nachahmung der dreieinigen Liebe und gleichsam einer nachträglichen Zulassung zur Teilnahme an ihr aufgedeckt werden können." Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 182. [226]: "Gerade auch die Fruchtbarkeit des Sich-Mehrens, die aus der Vereinigung von Mann und Frau stammt, ist Abbild jenes geheimnisvollen Wesens Gottes, das hier in einem unergründlichen Plural zu sich selber spricht: 'Laßt uns!' Gottes Wesen ist unendliche Fruchtbarkeit in der Trinität, die sich in der Schöpfung nach außen hin kundtut, und was immer nach seinem Bilde geschaffen ist, muß wesenhaft an dieser Fruchtbarkeit teilhaben." The question of the Trinity, the spouses and the family will be explored in more detail in the *Chapter 10*.

¹²⁶Cf. *Jo I*, 109-110. [89]: "Und ferner haben sie jeden Tag und jede Stunde die Möglichkeit, als Zweie im Namen Christi versammelt zu sein, so daß der Herr seiner Verheißung gemäß mitten unter ihnen sein muß. Aber alles das geschieht doch nur auf Grund ihres ersten Jaworts, das sie einander ausdrücklich in Gott gegeben und in welchem sie einander gegenseitig Gott überlassen und anheimgestellt haben. In dieser gegenseitigen Übergabe des Jaworts in Gott liegt das Geheimnis der natürlichen wie der übernatürlichen Fruchtbarkeit der christlichen Ehe begründet." Cf. also *Chr*, 84: "Das Sakrament war keine Zufälligkeit. Es ist eine Kraft, die nicht aufhört, weiter Kraft zu spenden." Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 199. [246]. Von Balthasar notes that already the way the spouses open themselves to God is a grace: "Die Art, wie sie sich zu Gott öffnen, ist selbst schon Gnade und daher fruchtbar, und so erwartet die Fruchtbarkeit von oben:

sanctification of the spouses themselves. However, the grace of marriage also opens the possibility that the spouses be blessed with the gift of children. From the beginning, should the spouses be so blessed, the child is given to them by God as gift. Yet, this gift is not entirely at the spouses' disposal. Ultimately the child belongs to God and the Church. Thus, he is to be given back to God to do with as he pleases. Christian spouses know that their child may be called to the priesthood or to a religious order; already on their wedding day, parents include the possibility of this sacrifice in their consent. Nonetheless, parents find consolation in the fruitfulness that is shared by marriage and the Church: even though a vocation to the priesthood or religious life can lead to the end of the natural fruitfulness of a family, it can lead to infinite fruitfulness in the Church.¹²⁷

One way husband and wife give testimony to the sanctity of marriage is in their mutual giving over to each other. Certainly this "giving over" [*Hingabe*] is lived in many different ways over the course of married life, however, it is "incarnated" in a special way in the conjugal act. Adrienne underlines that God bestows on the spouses the gift of their sexual relations, as a source of joy and enrichment for their marriage.¹²⁸ When Adrienne speaks of the "joy and enrichment" that the conjugal act brings to marriage, she is not alluding merely to an "emotional high" or to some feeling of psychological well-being. Rather, she refers to an enrichment that occurs on the spiritual level. God's gift of sexual intercourse to spouses is to be seen precisely as such, that is, as gift. A gift freely given and received is an expression of the love that the giver has for the receiver. With the gift of sexual intercourse to spouses, God gives spouses something of the same joy and enrichment that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit experience between them. Each Person is continually open to the "always greater" of love. Consequently, they are united in an "always greater" way. God desires that spouses have this same experience of spiritual enrichment and joy in sexual love.

Furthermore, Adrienne notes that when the conjugal act is carried out in obedience to the Church "a special transformation of substance occurs on the sacramental level; [...]"

mag diese nun ein Kind sein, das Gott ihnen schenkt, oder eine geistige Frucht, wenn sie die leibliche nicht erhalten."

¹²⁷Cf. *Jo I*, 110-112. [90-91]. Often Adrienne marks the contrast between "finite" bodily fruitfulness and "infinite" spiritual fruitfulness. In the context cited here, she contrasts the fruitfulness that comes from a religious vocation or the priesthood with bodily fruitfulness in the form of a child. Obviously, the possibility always exists that bodily fruitfulness can bring about spiritual fruitfulness. This will be discussed in more detail in *Chapter 10*.

¹²⁸Cf. *Chr*, 61-62: "In die Gabe des Geschlechtslebens hat Gott sein Geschenk an uns, ein Geschenk der Freude und der Bereicherung, zugleich aber auch unser Geschenk an Ihn gelegt; denn er hat uns das Leben nicht in sich abgeschlossen gegeben, sondern so sehr zu Ihm hin geöffnet, daß wir Ihm im weitesten Sinn geweihtes junges Leben weidergeben dürfen." Cf. *IK*, 180: "Der Mann, der zur Frau geht, erwartet etwas von ihr: Ergänzung, Freude. Und er bekommt es, weil Gott die Geschlechter aufeinander abgestimmt hat." With these citations, it is clear that A. recognizes that the conjugal act is not only for procreation or a "remedy for concupiscence," but something that enriches the spousal union in many ways. Cf. *NB XII*, 106-107. Adrienne emphasizes that their giving over [*Hingabe*] is never completely separated from God's giving in the Trinity, Incarnation, Eucharist and the Church. This will be further discussed in *Chapter 10*.

the conjugal act as material is 'super-formed' [*überformt*] by sacramental grace."¹²⁹ With these words, Adrienne wants to underline three important points regarding the sacramentality of the conjugal act. First, it is clear that the conjugal act, when it is consummated in purity and genuine love, is no longer a mere human act. It is formed by grace and elevated to an *ecclesial act*. Since the spouses are inserted in a truly incarnate, fleshly way into the Christ-Church union with the sacrament of marriage, the conjugal act becomes one way that the spouses experience the "fleshly" belonging to Christ and to the Church. Second, the conjugal act is an *existential act* whereby the spouses imitate the giving over of Christ and the receiving of the Church in the Lord's Eucharist. In the giving and receiving of the conjugal act, the spouses embody what they receive in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not merely an external sacramental grace that is imposed on the spouses, but it is incorporated into their lives in such a way that (1) the *total giving* over of Christ to the Church, (2) the *perfect receptivity* of the Son before the Father, and (3) the *complete availability* of Mary (Church) before God is re-enacted, interiorized and existentialized in the conjugal act. Third, as has been shown, the conjugal act is a *fruitful act* in many ways. It is sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, it leads to further sanctification and it opens the spouses to much spiritual and, God willing, bodily fruitfulness.

Throughout her writings on marriage, Adrienne emphasizes that in comparison with bodily fruitfulness, spiritual fruitfulness knows no boundaries.¹³⁰ Indeed, it is the spiritual fruitfulness of the spouses that always remains the primary foundation of their union.¹³¹

¹²⁹NB XII, 126-127: "Wenn der Akt im Sakrament, im Segen und Gehorsam der Kirche erfolgt, dann ereignet sich auf sakramentaler Ebene eine besondere Verwandlung der Substanz [...] Der Akt als Materie wird von der sakramentalen Gnade überformt." Cf. C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 69-70. R. explains that throughout the history of matrimony, the body has been linked with sacramentality more in juridical, material or functional terms. Little or no emphasis was placed on the nuptiality of the body. We see a change with Vatican II and GS, 48 ("It is an institution confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other...") Marriage is no longer simply an exchange of rights to the body of the other. Cf. C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 99-100. R. writes that Vatican II and GS in particular, are not entirely clear regarding the relation of conjugal acts with the sacramentality of marriage. GS, 49 states ambiguously that the acts of marriage are "consecrated by Christ's sacrament." However, Rocchetta underscores that conjugal love and the grace of the sacrament are considered two realities that are intertwined: "L'è la realtà umana dell'amore coniugale che diventa sacramento allo stesso modo in cui il sacramento non nega né annulla la realtà umana dell'amore coniugale, ma lo sana, lo corrobora e lo santifica, facendolo partecipare al mistero di grazia che fluisce tra Cristo e la Chiesa." Cf. John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 345. The Holy Father seems to go further than GS, 49 regarding the sacramentality of the body. He describes how the body is the visible sign of the sacrament. It expresses the spouses' giving over that they consent to on their wedding day and throughout their marriage: "Il sacramento o la sacramentalità—nel senso più generale di questo termine—si incontra con il corpo e presuppone la 'teologia del corpo.' Il sacramento, infatti, secondo il significato generalmente conosciuto, è un 'segno visibile.' ■ 'corpo' significa pure ciò che è visibile, significa la 'visibilità' del mondo e dell'uomo. Dunque, in qualche modo—anche se il più generale—il corpo entra nella definizione del sacramento, essendo esso 'segno visibile di una realtà invisibile,' cioè della realtà spirituale, trascendente, divina. In questo segno—e mediante questo segno—Dio si dona all'uomo nella sua trascendente verità e nel suo amore."

¹³⁰Cf. Jo IV, 153. [127].

¹³¹Cf. NB XII, 57. Regarding the conjugal act, Adrienne emphasizes that the spouses should always be aware that spiritual fruitfulness of their union is primary: "Von der Fruchtbarkeit der Ehe aus soll gedacht und erklärt werden, nicht primär von den Geschlechtsorganen aus." The spirituality of the conjugal act will

Thus, as long as man and woman give their entire fruitfulness over to the Lord, as long as they give him power over both their consummation of the conjugal act and their abstinence from it, they know God will bless them and make every situation fruitful.¹³² In this way, even when spouses are not able to have children, or when they face other difficulties such as a death of a child, the Holy Spirit makes their union fruitful in ways that they could not even imagine.¹³³

In order that a marriage be truly fruitful, it must be open to the mysteries of the Cross. By the grace of the Cross, each spouse is called out of one's own self, one's own self-centeredness and is joined to the selfless sacrifice of Christ.¹³⁴ This is portrayed, for example, in the conjugal union that is marked by a certain separation and renunciation. The spouses are joined so closely in the physical carrying out of the conjugal act that they become one flesh, but they cannot remain physically this way all the time. In the gift of the conjugal union, then, there lies a kernel of renunciation and separation. But precisely this renunciation is the mark of its authenticity, identifying it with Christ's suffering and renunciation.¹³⁵

Not only do fruitfulness, renunciation and suffering come together in the conjugal act, but also they intersect in parturition. With the fall, fruitfulness in marriage will always be linked with suffering and the pain that the woman experiences in giving birth.¹³⁶ However, man and woman are not alone in being placed under the "law of suffering and fruitfulness." Indeed, spouses imitate the Lord, Mary and the Church who are also under

be examined more in *Chapter 10*.

¹³²Cf. *Jo III*, 405. [303]. For a good summary of the ethical and anthropological difference between contraception and periodical abstinence, see: Livio Melina, "La procreación responsable: diferencia ética y antropológica entre contracepción y abstinencia periódica," in Jean Laffitte and Livio Melina, *Amor Conyugal y Vocación a la Santidad* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 1997), 97-112.

¹³³Cf. *Jo III*, 152-153. [116]. Cf. *FC*, 14: "It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children."

¹³⁴Cf. *Jo I*, 113. [91]: "In dieses Kreuzesgeheimnis hinein hat jede christliche Ehe sich aufzutun, um das Ich und alle eigene Substanz freizugeben durch die Familie hindurch, in einem Sichopfern mit Christus, in die Kirche hinein und durch diese in den Vater."

¹³⁵Cf. *Ma*, 445-446: "Im Geschenk der Fleischwerdung ist alles Leiden inbegriffen; Leid und Verzicht bilden den Echtheitsstempel für die Freude des Geschenks." Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 197. [244]. Von Balthasar explains that with the New Covenant, the grace of marriage is tied to the Cross. Still marriage must retain something of the one paradisaical state of life: "Im Neuen Bund wird aus der allgemeinen Übernatürlichkeit der Ehegnade die konkrete, geformte Übernatürlichkeit der Gnade Christi am Kreuz.[...] Sie kann es nur dadurch werden, daß sie am Geist des hingeopferten Christus teilnimmt. Und dies kann sie wiederum nur, wenn sie geheimnisvoll durch diesen Geist etwas zurückerhält von dem Geist des Paradieses, wie er vor der Trennung der Stände herrschte." Cf. J. O'Donnell, "H. U. von Balthasar sulla teologia del matrimonio," 484-485. O'Donnell writes of the presentiment of death in the conjugal act: "Ogni atto sessuale è in un certo senso una ribellione contro la morte. L'essere umano, moltiplicando il genere umano, si rebella contro la morte. Inoltre von Balthasar accetterebbe gli insegnamenti di certi psicologi moderni come Freud che vedono un legame intrinseco tra l'atto sessuale e la morte. In ogni atto del rapporto sessuale c'è un presentimento della morte."

¹³⁶Cf. *HI*, 86-87: "Auch die Braut wird wiederum in die Kette der schmerzhaft Gebärenden eingereiht werden: Fruchtbarkeit ist seit der Geschichte mit dem Baum an Leiden gebunden."

this law. But with the Lord's redemptive action on the Cross, birthing pains are given an expiatory role. Taking on the greatest burden on the Cross, Christ has "made room" for the pain of the woman who gives birth.¹³⁷

9.4.2 The Difficulties of Mixed Marriages

In her writings, Adrienne strongly advises against mixed marriages.¹³⁸ She notes that because marriage extends to everything the spouses share, practicing two different faiths is like speaking two distinct languages. Adrienne observes that early in a relationship, infatuation can cloud one's judgement and cause the man and woman to overlook their differences in faith. But after the spouses begin married life together, often these differences are the foundation for some difficulties and problems such as raising the children in the Catholic faith and the inability to participate fully in the sacraments together. Often, spouses end up abandoning their faith completely in the face of these difficulties. Nonetheless, Adrienne never advises that one convert to Catholicism merely so that both partners are Catholic before the wedding. The Catholic partner can serve as a mediation to God, but in the end, only God can bring him or her to conversion.¹³⁹

Although Adrienne's reserve over mixed marriage follows within the tradition of Pope Leo XIII,¹⁴⁰ the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*¹⁴¹ and *Casti Connubii*,¹⁴² perhaps her words sound harsh to today's modern, sensitive ears. After all, with the promulgation of *Matrimonio Mixta* in 1970 it seemed that the Church changed her view on mixed marriages considerably. In this *motu proprio*, Paul VI established norms for entering into mixed marriages that included the obligation for the Catholic party to raise any children in the Catholic faith, the necessity of obtaining a dispensation and several liturgical considerations.¹⁴³ Later these norms were implemented in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*.¹⁴⁴ However, a relatively recent study on mixed marriage seems to support Adrienne's misgivings. Mixed marriage too often leads to departure from the practice of the faith on the

¹³⁷Cf. *HI*, 88: "Und wenn der Herr nun seiner Mutter Sohn und die Kirche ihre Tochter ist, dann stehen beide unter dem Gesetz der Wehen, die auch die Mutter gekannt hat. Als Sohn dieser Mutter stellt der Herr sich selber unter dieses Gesetz, das Fruchtbarkeit und Leiden aneinanderbindet. Er hat, um die Menschheit zu erlösen, das menschliche Gesetz der Sühne in das Göttliche aufgenommen; Gott der Vater hatte von Anfang an aus Gnade den Wehen einen sühnenden Charakter beigegeben, und indem der Sohn ihnen ein göttliches Gewicht gab, konnte siene Sühne die Sünde der Welt überwiegen."

¹³⁸Cf. *Chr*, 39: "Aber klar sollst Du wissen: eine Mischehe soll nicht in Betracht gezogen werden, eine Konversion aber kann nur aus tiefster religiöser Überzeugung erfolgen." Cf. *Chr*, 33: "Es gibt sehr wenige Ehen, in denen Mann und Frau auf einem verschiedenen religiösen Boden stehen, und die trotzdem glücklich verlaufen. Ich glaube, man sollte sich von vornherein nie auf eine solche Ehe einlassen; denn das Zusammenleben verlangt vor allem Einigkeit, nicht nur Liebe." Adrienne does not clarify her precise understanding of a "mixed-marriage." Either it is a union between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian or a union between a Catholic and a non-Christian. However, it seems clear that she would advise strongly against both types.

¹³⁹Cf. *Chr*, 31-38.

¹⁴⁰*ADS*, 64.

¹⁴¹*CIC* §1060, (1917 version).

¹⁴²*CC*, 82.

¹⁴³*MM*.

¹⁴⁴*CIC*, § 1124-1129.

part of the Catholic partner.¹⁴⁵

Nonetheless, for those who do enter into a mixed marriage, Adrienne notes that the Catholic partner must take on the same task that both partners would assume in a sacramental marriage. Because the non-Catholic cannot be forced to take on the Catholic's faith, the latter is at a disadvantage. Precisely in this aspect, the Catholic spouse bears the Cross courageously knowing that the sacrifices that accompany marriage indicate that the kingdom of God is not of this world. Moreover, the Catholic spouse should know that the graces received have an effect on others similar to how the graces of Christ on the Cross have an effect on all sinners. Somehow the grace does not only benefit the Catholic partner, but the non-Catholic partner as well, since Jesus suffered not for himself, but for the Father and for all men in order to bring about their sanctity.¹⁴⁶

9.4.3 The Theological Foundations of Headship and Subjection

As she does with spousal fruitfulness, Adrienne understands the Pauline doctrine of the spousal roles of headship and subjection (*Eph* 5, 21-33; *Col* 3, 18-19) as founded in and flowing from the eternal ordering of the trinitarian Persons. For Adrienne, the ordering of man and woman is not based on the whim of a particular time and culture, but it is the "image and likeness" of the perpetual ordering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because the Father is the Head of the Son, the Son is obedient to him; the Spirit is the fruit. Likewise, because the man is the head of the woman, she is obedient and subjected to him.¹⁴⁷ Each spouse can understand his or her role by looking to the Son who allows himself to be given as their Head. In this way, the woman does not see an absolute headship in the man; the man is her head only because the Son is his Head. Knowing that he can never

¹⁴⁵Cf. Dean Hoge, "Who Leaves the Church? Who enters it?" in *Origins* (Washington D.C.) 10/15 (September 25, 1980), 236. An evangelization study conducted in 1979 and 1980 found that 40 percent of Catholics marry non-Catholics. Of these marriages, it was estimated that half produce no conversion at all either before or after the wedding. Thus, they remain mixed marriages. Of the other fifty percent, the ratio of *non-Catholics converting to Catholicism* to *Catholics leaving Catholicism* changed over the 1960's and '70's. In the 1950's, about three people came into the Catholic Church for each one who left. However, recently it has been estimated that the ratio is almost one to one. Therefore, for every mixed marriage, one Catholic leaves the faith and one Catholic converts.

¹⁴⁶Cf. *IK*, 203-205. Cf. *1 Cor* 7, 12-14. Adrienne seems to be speaking in a general sense here. She does not qualify how the non-Catholic partner will benefit from the grace. Cf. C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 188. Like Adrienne, Rocchetta examines *1 Cor* 7, 14 ("For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband."). He questions what *consecration* or *sanctity* means in the context of a marriage between a baptized and non-baptized. Above all, it does not necessarily indicate sacramentality. The sacramentality of marriage regards the *couple* and the *covenant* as such. Thus, a marriage between a baptized and non-baptized cannot be sacramentally realized. He writes: "Quando uno dei due non è inserito in Cristo e nella Chiesa mediante il battesimo, non si vede come questo vincolo possa sacramentalmente realizzarsi e attingere alla sua pienezza cristo-ecclesiale." On the one hand, the Church does not deny these unions. On the other hand, she does not call them sacramental. Rocchetta clarifies: "La Chiesa, evidentemente, non può rifiutarsi a matrimoni di questo genere, perché prevale il diritto naturale al matrimonio rispetto alla sua pienezza sacramentale, ma è obbligata a ritenerlo come un sacramento in senso pieno?"

¹⁴⁷Reserving the theological foundations of headship and subjection for this "doctrinal" chapter, the spiritual embodying of headship and subjection in the man-woman relationship will be addressed in *Chapter 10*.

fulfill his role as head of the woman perfectly, the man must humble himself before Christ in order to carry his higher position.¹⁴⁸

Contemplating the Trinity, Adrienne emphasizes that it is precisely the demand and might of the Father that enables the Son to be so given over during his life on earth and especially on the Cross. The Holy Spirit is the Person who mediates the exchange. All three Persons work together to bring about the Redemption of the world. Thus, the Redemption of marriage, and therefore the order of man and woman in marriage,¹⁴⁹ becomes the combined fruit of the *might* [*Potenz*] of the Father and the pure giving over [*reinen Hingabe*] of the Son. The *indissoluble unity* [*unlösbar Einheit*] of both characteristics (*might* and *pure giving over*) is produced through the Holy Spirit. But this unity becomes possible in the Trinity, as well as in man and woman, when each of the persons involved (Father, Son and Spirit; man and woman) retains the “highest possible polarity.” Therefore, it is each Person’s and person’s distinctiveness that affects and preserves the unity between them.¹⁵⁰

Clarifying more precisely how this distinctiveness of being leads to the unity of the Persons, Adrienne points out that since there is no gradation of being in the Persons of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely divine. In other words, the Father is not “less God” than the Son, nor is the Spirit “less God” than the Father. In this way, the distinctiveness of Persons does not mean a lessening in being, but “each Person possesses its unity and infinitude even more precisely through the distinctiveness of the relationships

¹⁴⁸Cf. *IK*, 315: “*Das Haupt* des Sohnes ist der Vater. Jetzt, da diese Wahrheit offenbar wurde, wird das Rätsel des Geschlechterverhältnisses unter den Menschen gelöst: im Abbild der Trinität kann beides zusammenbestehen: Gleichheit des Wesens und hierarchisch geordnete Stufung [...] Wir haben also im Geschlechtlichen nicht mehr bloß den Zoll an der vergänglichen Natur zu sehen, sondern—so sehr das Geschlechtliche in der jetzigen Form vergeht—einen Abglanz und eine Vorahnung des ewigen Lebens.” Cf. also *Ep*, 188. [228]: “Der Herr lebt als der ewig je jetzt gezeugte Sohn des Vaters in einer ewig je jetzt sich vollziehenden Unterwerfung unter den Liebeswillen des Vaters.” Cf. also *NB XII*, 23: “Die Unterwerfung des Sohnes unter den Vater ist die trinitarische Rechtfertigung der Unterwerfung des Weibes unter den Mann.”

Cf. J. Matro, *Christian Suffering*, 86. Matro ingeniously employs the image of two people dancing to describe how hierarchy and equality in being are compatible in the Trinity, and, therefore by extension, how they can be compatible in marriage. Dancing together, two partners gracefully combine their moves with the music. It would be difficult to identify the one who leads and the one who follows. But the gracefulness of the dance depends on the cues of the leader and responses of the follower. One cannot say that the man who leads is greater than the woman who follows. Both are needed to make the dance flow gracefully. Where is the Holy Spirit in Matro’s analogy? “The Spirit is the very dance which unites these partners.” (p. 95) Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, “Ein Wort zu ‘*Humanae Vitae*’,” 122. [214-215]. Von Balthasar affirms Adrienne’s observation that the subjection of the woman to the man is not based on a particular cultural practice, but on a theological norm, the Christ-Church relationship: “Dazu ist erstens zu sagen, daß das Verhältnis von Mann und Frau in der Ehe ein Gleichnis ist für das Verhältnis Christus-Kirche und sich nach dieser Norm zu regeln hat. Die ausschlaggebende Norm für das Verhalten des Mannes der Frau gegenüber ist also eine *theologische* Norm, nicht eine aus der allgemeinen Sitte einer Zeit sich ergebende.”

¹⁴⁹Cf. *K*, 106. [134]: “Im Herrn wird die Ehe neu begründet. Eine gewisse Unterordnung in der Liebe bleibt, aber sie wird gesegnet. Der Sohn ist dauernd dem Willen des Vaters untertan; als Sohn, als Gott tut er den Willen des Vaters, er tut ihn aber auch als Mensch, und zwar so umfassend, daß die Menschen in ihren Ordnungen davon leben können. Unterordnung ist jetzt nicht mehr erzwungene, qualvolle Demütigung, sie ist Heiligung in den Herrn hinein, Ordnung in seine Ordnung.”

¹⁵⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 23.

between the Persons in such a way that each Person uncovers the distinctive characteristics of the other.”¹⁵¹ Each Person of the Trinity is infinitely distinctive, yet they are infinitely united to the point that they are One.

9.4.4 Marriage and Virginity as Christian States of Life

As explained in subsection 9.2.4, marriage and virginity were not two separate states in Paradise. Instead, they were united into one, existing state. With the fall, the one state of life was shattered forever. But in Christ’s Incarnation and Redemption and with Mary’s role as co-foundress,¹⁵² the Christian states of marriage and virginity were founded and made holy.¹⁵³ Although both states of life are holy, the married person and the consecrated person strive for holiness in different ways. Adrienne explains that the virgin or consecrated person chooses God as the true “Thou” in his life, while the married person encounters one’s “thou” more in one’s spouse and through the spouse, he or she knows God. Therefore, in the consecrated state of life, God reveals himself to the virgin in a more direct and personal way, while in marriage, God is revealed mainly through another human person. Because the virgin’s is a more “direct” path to God, Adrienne sustains that, at least in this one way, the state of virginity is superior to marriage.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Cf. *I K*, 314. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Dramma, Theological Dramatic Theory, Volume V, The Last Act* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), transl. Graham Harrison, 83: “This self-giving cannot be motivated by anything other than itself; hence it is a boundless love where freedom and necessity coincide and where identity and otherness are one: identity, since the Lover gives all that he is and nothing else, and otherness, since otherwise the Lover would love only himself.”

¹⁵²Cf. *MH*, 70-71. [64-65]. Cf. *MH*, 137-138. [124-125]. A. notes that because Mary was led into each state by God, she, along with the Son, is the co-founder of each. First, in her union with Joseph the state of marriage and its physical demands of providing shelter, food and clothing for the family were emphasized. Second, with John, the state of virginity, with its spiritual fruitfulness for the Church, is underscored. When Jesus grew up in the embrace of the Holy Family, Jesus had to adapt to Mary and Joseph. Under the Cross, Mary must adapt to John. The Lord lives through the office of John’s priesthood into which Mary is incorporated. Mary, in turn, offers to John and the world, her spiritual fruitfulness. In this way, Mary, who once bore Jesus in her womb, adapts to John who now bears Christ in his priestly office.

¹⁵³Cf. *Chr*, 142: “Beide Stände sind heilig, haben ihre dringenden Pflichten und können in vollkommener Reinheit erlebt werden.”

¹⁵⁴Cf. *St*, 73. [74]: “Weil der jungfräuliche Mensch Gott als das eigentliche Du seines Lebens wählt, entfaltet sich ihm das göttliche Wesen personal. Der eheliche Mensch dagegen findet sein Du primär im Mitmenschen, Gott erkennt er nicht so sehr unmittelbar als durch den Menschen hindurch; das Personale Gottes leuchtet ihm auf in der andern menschlichen Person. Hier zeigt sich eine Überlegenheit des jungfräulichen Standes.” Cf. Antonio Sicari, *Matrimonio e verginità nella rivelazione, l'uomo di fronte alla "gelosia di Dio"* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1977), 57-58. Sicari observes that we have reached an understanding that the states of life are complementary, but we still have more work to do in order to uncover the synthetic element that allows the states of life to be seen in full harmony with each other. “Se ripensiamo a tutto l’iter del pensiero teologico al riguardo, oggi bisogna riconoscere che l’alternativa ha fortunatamente ceduto di fronte a un più maturo bisogno di considerare i due stati nella loro complementarità. Eppure, a nostro parere, ciò non è ancora sufficiente.” (p. 57) “E’ questo che, a nostro parere, segna la strada di un ulteriore lavoro da compiere: scrutare l’elemento sintetico che permette di percepire armonicamente la forma piena che comprende in sé ambedue i carismi.” (p. 58) Also, Sicari underlines that each state is a *sequela Christi*: “Verginità e matrimonio sono quindi due stati di vita cristiani: due modi esistenzialmente totalizzanti di porsi alla sequela di Cristo. Nessuno dei due concede limitazioni giustificabili alla dedizione di sé: ambedue sono di fronte alla luce purissima e bruciante del radicalismo evangelico.” (p. 58) Indeed, not only is the *nuptial meaning of the*

Moreover, Adrienne observes that because the married person is immersed in the things of the world more than the consecrated person, and thus more situated in the consequences of original sin, the consecrated person has an advantage.¹⁵⁵ Above all, the Lord is the founder and ideal of both states, but marriage is a *reference* to this ideal, while the state of the counsels strives to *live forth from* this ideal.¹⁵⁶ Both states demand obedience to the Lord. The evangelical state lives from Mary's assent to God through the archangel Gabriel, while the married state lives from the Lord's giving of Mary and John to each other at the foot of the Cross. Hence, like the Lord's sacrifice on the Cross, both states were founded as a service to the Church and the world.

Adrienne writes that the Church not only nourishes both states with her grace, but also she receives nourishment in return. Thus, the Church resembles parents, who in having and raising a child, receive a new spirit for their marriage. In experiencing the liveliness, that is fruit of their child, the parents allow this liveliness to reverberate back to the child. It is a mutual experience of the outpouring and nourishing of grace: between the parents and the child, as well as, between the Church and the states of life. Adrienne underlines that the Church has to be open to receiving new life from her children. Otherwise, if she were only to be centered on evangelizing new peoples and not expecting to receive enrichment from them, she would fail in her mission to be the Bride of Christ.¹⁵⁷

Not only does the Church have to be open to receiving nourishment from marriage, but also she has a responsibility to interpret God's teaching on marriage. However, married persons are not exempt from this responsibility either. Both the Church and those in the state of marriage must try to have a better understanding of the inner, spiritual life of marriage.¹⁵⁸ In her theology of marriage, with its strong emphasis on the trinitarian, christological and ecclesial aspects, Adrienne offers an incisive and important contribution towards a deeper understanding of the spirituality of marriage.

While some spouses slide into marriage without making a true discernment of God's will for them, others make a true Christian choice to marry. Adrienne observes that one indication of those who have truly discerned and chosen marriage is that they have a

body lived in each state of life, but also there exists a "nuptiality" between the states of life. Cf. *Christifidelis laici*, 55. Cf. John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 309: "Il perfetto amore coniugale deve essere contrassegnato da quella fedeltà e da quella donazione all'unico sposo (ed anche della fedeltà e della donazione dello sposo all'unica sposa), su cui sono fondati la professione religiosa ed il celibato sacerdotale. In definitiva, la natura dell'uno e dell'altro amore è 'sponsale,' cioè espressa attraverso il dono totale di sé. L'uno e l'altro amore tende ad esprimere quel significato sponsale del corpo, che 'dal principio' è iscritto nella stessa struttura personale dell'uomo e della donna."

¹⁵⁵Cf. *St.*, 80. [81].

¹⁵⁶Cf. *NB IX*, 435. Here also Adrienne discounts the possibility of a third state: "Ein dritter Stand aber wäre wie das Residuum eines Residuums; ein solcher existiert christlich gar nicht."

¹⁵⁷Cf. *St.*, 169. [169]. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 200. [247]. Von Balthasar writes that marriage cannot be thought of strictly as a state of physical love and virginity as a state of spiritual love: "Ehestand und Stand der Erwählung stehen sich nicht als Stand der leiblichen und Stand der rein geistigen Liebe gegenüber, da beide Standesformen Darstellung sind der einen geistleiblichen Liebe Christi zu seiner Kirche und in ihr zu Menschheit. Durch die Menschwerdung der Gnade wird die geistige Liebe (des zweiten Standes) zu einer notwendig inkarnierten, und die leibliche Liebe (der ersten Standes) zu einer auch im Leibe gerechtfertigten und vom Geiste durchwirkten."

¹⁵⁸Cf. *St.*, 162. [163].

strong desire to give testimony to the goodness of marriage. Perhaps, other Christians have never considered their marriage as a vital organ for building up the Church or never reflected upon the significance of living marriage as a state of life. By their testimony, therefore, Christian spouses witness to the true sanctity of marriage.¹⁵⁹

9.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the anthropological and dogmatic foundations of Christian marriage according to Adrienne von Speyr have been gathered together and discussed. Beginning with Creation, we traced the origins of the man-woman relationship in Paradise, to the fall, to the Incarnation, to the Redemption and the institution of sacramental marriage on the Cross and to marriage in the life of the Church. Throughout the chapter, the themes of *bodiliness* and *fruitfulness* have emerged time and again.¹⁶⁰ Adopting as a hermeneutical key Adrienne's understanding of the principal themes of *bodiliness* and *fruitfulness* in God, the Virgin Mary and the man-woman relationship, it is possible to summarize how marriage is a "Christian consecration of the natural spiritual and bodily relation between man and woman" that "makes it unlimited and overflowing."¹⁶¹

In God, *bodiliness* and *fruitfulness* are revealed, above all, in the Son of God. Even in Creation, the Father creates man and woman in the image of the Son, who as the incarnate Son, is the perfect man. After the fall, human bodiliness and fruitfulness await Redemption that can be brought about in no other way than through God becoming man. In Jesus Christ, perfect bodiliness and fruitfulness come together. Not content to redeem the man-woman relationship externally, simply by showering grace like manna on hungry mankind, God sends his only Son. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father and bestowed with a human body, that already in the womb of Mary forms and nourishes her spirit in a perfectly fruitful way. Born in the loving embrace of Mary and Joseph, Jesus allows himself to be raised in a human family.

The Son carries out his earthly mission using his body; he reveals his Father, his mission and his Holy Spirit. Finally, on the Cross, in an act that is infinitely fruitful, Christ gives over his body to the Father in the Holy Spirit for the Redemption of mankind. In the giving of himself for the sake of his body, the Church, Our Lord shows what it means to give one's body over to another. His suffering and death are so fruitful that from his own

¹⁵⁹Cf. St. 94. [94].

¹⁶⁰A non-scientific word count was conducted in order to reveal key terms. The following terms emerged repeatedly, mainly in the footnotes containing citations from Adrienne's works: *Frucht*, *Fruchtbarkeit*, *befruchten* = 33 times; *Leib*, *leiblich* = 17 times; *Geist* [*Heiliger Geist* = 10 times], *geistig*, *geistlich*, *geistigleiblich* [one time] = 36 times. Although it is clear that "spirit" emerged more than "body" in this non-scientific word search, we will focus on "body" rather than "spirit" while keeping in mind that Adrienne's theology of marriage is always a theology of the "body and spirit" of the man and woman. We have seen this clearly in her writings, especially in *Theologie der Geschlechter*. Thus, the spiritual life of the man and woman is lived through and in their bodies. And their bodily life is lived through and in their spirits. Essentially, marriage is a "spiritual-bodily" (*geistigleibliches*) relationship. Cf. *Jo I*, 108. [88]: "Das Sakrament der Ehe hat seine Besonderheit und Differenzierung in der christlichen Weihe des natürlichen, geistigleiblichen Verhältnisses zwischen Mann und Frau. Aber gerade darin liegt auch der Ansatzpunkt ihrer überströmenden Unendlichkeit." Therefore, it is understood that bodiliness for Adrienne is really "spiritual bodiliness."

¹⁶¹Cf. *Jo I*, 108. [88].

body he gives birth to the Church and the sacraments. Thus, from within, the Son of God redeems marriage, sanctifying bodily relations between man and woman and bestowing upon them his infinite fruitfulness.

In Mary, *bodiliness* and *fruitfulness* are powerfully revealed in the virgin conception of the Son of God. When Mary receives Our Lord into her body at the Annunciation, she experiences a pre-eminent bodily and spiritual encounter with the Lord: a bodily encounter that is infinitely fruitful. Mary is so fruitful that all forms of fruitfulness---bodily and spiritual, virginal and marital---are modeled on her own. Mary's virginal and bodily fruitfulness sheds light on paradisaal bodily-virginal fruitfulness. Like Mary, Adam and Eve were completely united to God and to each other in the one state of life that existed. On account of the fall, however, Mary's fruitfulness is also marked by renunciation and separation. At the foot of the Cross, she experiences sorrow at the death of her Son, the fruit of her womb. Yet, in a final fruitful act before his death, the Son gives Mary and John to each other as the "archetype couple" of marriage. In her virginal union with John, (as well as in her earlier virginal union with Joseph), Mary embodies the fruitfulness of all marriages which is primarily spiritual.

United in Christian marriage, man and woman give their *bodiliness* and *fruitfulness* to God for sanctification. In Paradise, man and woman lived in a union that was virginal and bodily fruitful. However, after the fall, their union would be marked by a certain renunciation and suffering. No longer living completely "next to each other," the woman would now be subjected to the man and bear children in pain. The man would work by the sweat of his brow. Thus, after the fall, true fruitfulness is always tinged by suffering. But with the Son's death on the Cross, marriage is redeemed and made a sacrament. Just as the Son's death on the Cross is irrevocable, binding and infinitely fruitful, so too Christian spouses give their irrevocable consent to be bound together with God in a union that is blessed with spiritual fruitfulness, and often by physical fruitfulness. By giving oneself to the other, man and woman imitate Christ's giving over. Thus, by the sacrament of marriage, the giving over [*Hingabe*] of one's body to the other in the conjugal act is made holy and fruitful. Christian spouses' *Hingabe* can be fruitful for their own family and for the Church in bringing about vocations to the consecrated life and gives testimony of their love for each other to the communion of saints. Above all, Christian spouses give their fruitfulness over to the Lord to do with as he pleases. Even in difficult situations, for example, when a Christian couple cannot have children, the Lord makes their union fruitful above all expectations. Sanctified in marriage, the roles of headship and subjection find their theological justification in the Trinity, where equality of being is completely compatible with hierarchical ordering.

The Christian states of life, marriage and virginity, represent two "states of holiness." On the one hand, the Christian spouse finds one's "thou" in one's spouse and together they strive toward holiness. On the other hand, the consecrated person is called by God, his true "Thou," to follow Christ in the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. Both marriage and virginity bring fruitfulness to the Church. In turn, the Church nourishes, guides and protects the states of life.

Chapter Ten: Spousal and Familial Spirituality

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, Adrienne von Speyr's writings on the spiritual life of Christian spouses and families will be brought together summarily and elaborated on. In section 10.2, Adrienne's "theology of the sexes" will be more closely examined. This includes the realm of conjugal sexuality and bodily fruitfulness. Thus, the themes of sexual intimacy, the conjugal act, pregnancy and parturition will be considered in more profundity. Section 10.3 includes a closer look at the spirituality of marital roles. In *Chapter 9*, it was shown how man's headship and woman's subjection make up a theological norm founded on the Trinity and the Christ-Church relationship. In this chapter, it will be manifested how these roles are lived in the spiritual life of the spouses and the family. Finally, in section 10.4, the life of prayer and the sacraments in marriage and in the time of preparation before marriage will be discussed in detail.

10.2 Spirituality and Sexuality

One of the fundamental points of Adrienne's "theology of the sexes" is that the sexual sphere is to be integrated into the whole human, Christian, ecclesial, Christological and Trinitarian realm.¹ In this section, following her insight, the spirituality of spousal sexuality, and in particular, the conjugal act, will be seen through the prism of its human, Christian, ecclesial, Christological and trinitarian dimensions. First, in subsection 10.2.1, the fundamental importance of preserving the mysterious nature of spousal sexuality will be highlighted. In subsection 10.2.2, the conjugal act in the bodily and spiritual *human* dimension will be examined in its profundity. In subsection 10.2.3, the spirituality of the conjugal act in its *Christo-ecclesial* dimensions will be highlighted. In subsection 10.2.4, the *trinitarian* dimension of the conjugal act will be more closely considered. While the material is divided into different subsections, it is clear that spousal sexual relations are a combination of all five dimensions. Adrienne underscores that the sexual realm is never solely a human reality; it is also, at the same time, Christo-ecclesial and trinitarian. In subsection 10.2.5, "obstacles to fruitfulness" is studied. In subsection 10.2.6, "abstinence and natural family planning" are examined. In subsections 10.2.7 and 10.2.8, Adrienne's "theology of pregnancy and parturition" will be penetrated more profoundly in two steps: first from the point of view of the spouses; second from the point of view of the Virgin Mary. In subsection 10.2.9, Adrienne's advice to priests and marriage counselors will be considered. Finally, in subsection 10.2.10, the theme of the Trinity and the family will be briefly studied.

¹Cf. *NB XII*, 11: "Deshalb ist es wichtig, daß heute die Frage gesamthaft, ohne Scheu und öffentlich aufgegriffen werden, und zwar nicht in der Isolierung der sexuellen Sphäre, wo sie nicht lösbar sind, sondern in der Integration ins Gesamtmenschliche, Christliche, Kirchliche, Christologische und Trinitarische."

10.2.1 Mystery and Intimacy in Marriage and Family

On a number of occasions throughout her writings on matrimony, Adrienne stresses that spouses are to respect and value the mysterious character of the marriage sacrament. This is done when each spouse nurtures a certain reserve before the intimate mysteries that surround the body and the spiritual life of the other. By showing discretion and mutual respect in their relations, Christian spouses foster a reverence for the mysterious and sacramental nature of marriage while preserving an intimacy with each other and with God their Creator and Redeemer. Thus, spouses have a personal, private and intimate relationship, but they also leave space for mystery and for the unknown.

Adrienne notes that two intimacies exist in marriage: that *between husband and wife* and that *between each spouse and God*.² The intimacy *between husband and wife* is characterized by the awareness that an intimate relationship exists without the necessity of articulating every thought, feeling or secret that passes between husband and wife. Indeed, the closeness of hearts that exists between two spouses who truly love each other and are genuinely friends is not always achieved through verbal communication. When describing the shroud of mystery that envelops the betrothal of Joseph and Mary, Adrienne explains that all spouses should have something of this secrecy between them. Spouses abide in this secrecy and mystery, for example, by hardly discussing their most intimate union. Instead of speaking of their thoughts and discoveries that might have arisen during the encounter, they allow it to remain wrapped in silence and protected by the reverence that each spouse shows to the other.³

The reverential intimacy that exists between spouses is a manifestation of the intimacy that abides *between each spouse and God*. It is each spouse's spiritual life that brings greater fruit and vitality to the marriage.⁴ Because the primary fruitfulness of

²Cf. *Chr*, 131. In a response to a question regarding prayer in marriage, Adrienne writes: "Es ist schwer, Ihnen auf Ihre Frage hin einen Rat zu erteilen, denn sie berührt ein doppeltes Geheimnis: das Ihrer Intimität zu Ihrem Manne, und dann das Ihrer Intimität zu Gott."

³Cf. *MH*, 65. [59-60]: "So werden auch zwei reine Menschen in der Ehe kaum über ihre intimste Vereinigung sprechen, nicht einmal über das, was sie vorher darüber gedacht und empfunden haben. Alles wird eingeschlossen bleiben im Akt der Ehrfurcht voreinander, der Schweigen fordert. Um so mehr muß das Geheimnis Marias gewahrt werden, denn ihre Bindung an Gott ist eine tiefere als jede Bindung an einen Mann. Dieses Schweigen der Mutter ihrem irdischen Bräutigam gegenüber wird der Kirche niemals verloren gehen. Es ist eine in den christlichen Ehen weiterlebende Gnade." Adrienne's insight that spouses should hardly speak of their most intimate encounters, brings to mind that words have a certain limit in their capacity to capture a particular experience. An intimate encounter between spouses can bring about so many different experiences and feelings that to talk of them would only devalue what each spouse discovered. Thus, to a certain extent, one ponders in one's heart what one discovers of oneself or of one's spouse. Cf. *NB XII*, 118: "Je intimer die leibliche Beziehung, desto tiefer die Achtung vor dem Unfaßlichen. Und wenn die Begierlichkeit überwunden ist, dann werden die Partner hineingezogen in die Unermeßlichkeit der göttlichen Freude." Needless to say, it is important that spouses communicate with each other and share their thoughts and feelings. Too often, a marriage goes astray because spouses cease communicating and do not find ways to bring spark to their relationship.

⁴Cf. *MH*, 65. [60]: "Das Geheimnis der Gatten, das jedes von ihnen Gott gegenüber hat, kann die gegenseitige Liebe nicht nur nicht stören, sondern nur befruchten, vertiefen, veredeln. Weit entfernt, die Ganzheit der Hingabe zu gefährden, ist es auf die Dauer die beste Verbürgung der stets neuen Lebendigkeit menschlicher Liebe." Cf. *Chr*, 63. That the conjugal act itself remains somewhat of a mystery between husband and wife points to its divine origin: "Der Akt selber bleibt zuletzt ein Geheimnis zwischen Mann und

marriage is spiritual, it is clear that each spouse ought to have an intimate, spiritual relationship with God. In today's age, there is much advice offered in men's and women's magazines and elsewhere regarding how couples can attain a good, happy relationship. Often, the emphasis is placed on the pleasure aspect of the spousal sexual relationship. Adrienne's insights, however, underscore that a genuinely profound spousal sexual relationship is enjoyed to the extent that each partner develops an intimate spiritual relationship with God. In other words, a good sexual relationship is one where each spouse strives to always cultivate ever deeper his or her spiritual life.

The child draws from the spiritual fruitfulness that bursts forth from his parents' union in and with Christ in the sacrament of matrimony. Even though he does not participate in all the intimate and mysterious aspects of his parents' fruitful love, he is formed by it and lives forth from it.⁵ Nonetheless, each child must also be allowed to nurture his own intimate relationship with God.⁶ Already at a young age, children have the capacity to grow spiritually. They have a natural childlikeness that recognizes the Lord's all-encompassing love in the touch of his father, mother, brothers and sisters. Even before the child can speak, much of God's love can be communicated to him in the smile, loving embrace and care of his parents and siblings.⁷

When parents are to educate their children on sexual matters, they do so in a way that shows an appreciation for the underlying mysteries of human sexuality. Indeed, precisely these mysterious and hidden aspects of conjugal love are an expression of its divine origin. Parents preserve these mysteries when they explain the beauty of sexual life to their children in a gradual but timely manner by using helpful examples from everyday life, by establishing trust with the child, by giving the child the opportunity to ask questions and by helping the child to see his place in the family.⁸ Adrienne emphasizes that this type of education should take place in the home.⁹ Moreover, when the sense of the mysterious nature of human sexuality is confided trustingly from parent to child, the child will also learn that this same mystery and trust exists between the parents. Rather than being frightened or perplexed over a new understanding of his parents' relationship, if educated

Frau, das sich aber den beiden trotz aller empfundenen Liebe und Hingabe nie völlig enthüllt. Denn es gibt Geheimnisse zwischen sich Liebenden, die auch für sie selber im Schweigen geborgen bleiben, und eben das ist das Zeichen der Echtheit ihres göttlichen Ursprungs."

⁵Cf. *Jo III*, 14-15. [14-15]. Cf. *Jo IV*, 189. [156].

⁶Cf. *Chr*, 161. In one letter from *Christiane*, a mother writes of the relationship she has with her daughter: "Christiane und ich sind ja sehr intim, aber gerade weil wir einander so nahe sind, wissen wir beide, daß Gott noch näher steht, ich muß dem Kinde seine Intimität mit Gott lassen und sie nicht durch meine Frage stören; es ändert an unserer Liebe nichts, daß wir voreinander in Gott letzte Geheimnisse haben; im Gegenteil, es schenkt unserer Liebe das Übernatürliche, das sie erst auf ewige Zeiten festigt."

⁷Cf. *Mk* 10, 13-16. How parents pray with their children will be addressed in section 10.4.2.

⁸Cf. *Chr*, 13-21.

⁹Cf. *Chr*, 13-14. To a mother seeking advice on the best way to educate her daughter on sexual matters, Adrienne writes: "Erziehung und Aufklärung gehen aber mehr oder weniger parallel vor sich, da die Erkenntnis zunächst spontan und ohne Ihr Zutun durch die tägliche Erfahrung gefördert wird. An ihr wächst Ihre Tochter innerlich; sie wird somit erzogen, begreift zugleich das Leben und seine Forderungen besser, was eben Aufklärung im weiteren Sinne bedeutet. Sie aber sind als Mutter verantwortlich und können diese Entfaltung nicht dem Zufall überlassen. Sie müssen leiten und ergänzen, hie und da auch wilde Schlößlinge zurückbinden und abschneiden."

properly, the child will be enriched and feel closer to his parents.¹⁰

The intimacy that abides in the heart of familial relationships is ultimately fruit of the mysterious, intimate love of the Trinity. In a similar way that children live forth from the intimacy of their parents' love, the parents and their children live forth from the ever more intimate love that flows between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Adrienne notes insightfully that the love between the Father and Son is revealed most powerfully when each is turned away from the other on Holy Saturday, when the Son has allowed himself to be abandoned by the Father. Describing the abandonment of the Son by the Father as a "mystery of the passage of the incarnate Son into the darkness of the Ever-Greater Father," Adrienne explains that often the greatest intimacy exists between two people when they are actually "turned away from each other."¹¹ One desires to show something to the other that

¹⁰Cf. *Chr*, 16-17: "Stellt nun das Kind von vielen Frauen gefürchtete Frage: 'und Vater und du auch?' dann werden Sie die bejahende Antwort ohne Zögern erteilen und hinzufügen: wie aber das, was wir miteinander besprochen haben, ein Geheimnis bleibt zwischen dir und mir, so bleibt das andere ein Geheimnis zwischen Vater und mir. Und Sie werden Ihre Worte so wählen, daß Ihr Kind sich nicht beunruhigt fühlt, sondern bereichert, und sich durch neue Liebe an Sie gebunden weiß." Cf. Pius XI, *DIM*, 64-67. In this encyclical, Pius XI warns against the false presumption to "forearm youths against the dangers of sensuality by means purely natural, such as foolhardy initiation and precautionary instruction for all indiscriminately, even in public." He continues noting that the parent cooperates with grace in giving private instruction to his child, but in such a way to quench and calm his sexual temptations, rather than to encourage them. Pius XI advises against co-education. Cf. John Paul II, *FC*, 37. John Paul II takes up Pius XI's pastoral advice (and Adrienne's) when he affirms that sexual education must be carried out in the home and it must be personal, "for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person---body, emotions and soul---and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love." John Paul II also links proper parental education of children on sexual matters to a foundation for discerning a state of life: "Indeed, Christian parents, discerning the signs of God's call will devote special attention and care to education in virginity or celibacy as the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality." Cf. Pontifical Council of the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Guidelines for Education within the Family*, 65-111. This document, from 1995, is written in the same spirit that Adrienne reveals in the concrete and practical advice offered in *Christiane*. It gives practical guidelines to parents on topics such as how to give individualized formation, how to offer moral explanations and how to show that spiritual growth must accompany biological growth. The document also outlines the child's principal stages of development (the years of innocence, puberty, adolescence and towards adulthood) and gives directives on how sexual education should be conducted within each phase.

¹¹Cf. *Jo IV*, 187-189. [154-156]: "Nun aber eröffnet der Vater dem Sohn dieses Geheimnis, indem er das Geheimnis, indem er das Geheimnis selbst an seiner Stelle zu ihm reden läßt. Gott zeigt ihm sein Geheimnis; aber indem er ihm sein Geheimnis zeigt, zeigt er sich selber nicht. Oft besteht zwischen Menschen die größte Nähe und Intimität nicht dann, wenn sie miteinander reden oder verkehren, sondern dann, wenn sie voneinander abgewendet sind. Es kann der eine dem anderen etwas so Geheimes und Verborgenes zeigen wollen, daß er es nur in der eigenen Abwesenheit tun kann, nur abgewendet darauf hinweisen kann, nur schriftlich vielleicht, jedenfalls nur indirekt [...] So zeigt der Vater dem Sohn das Geheimnis in der Dunkelheit, als Dunkelheit, und der Sohn wird es in Dunkelheit betrachten und als Dunkelheit bestehen lassen [...] Der Karsamstag ist ein Geheimnis des Schreitens des menschgewordenen Sohnes in das Dunkel des je-größern Vaters hinein." This "darkness" [*Dunkelheit*] is not sinister but it points to the mystery of *otherness* between the Father and the Son. Cf. *NB XII*, 143-144. Adrienne notes that mystery is preserved fundamentally in God: "Liebende können alles daransetzen, so lang und so häufig wie möglich miteinander zu verkehren. Aber auch wenn sie ein Höchstes erreichen, das Geheimnis bleibt. So bleibt auch in Gott das Unfaßlich, daß das Du ewig Du bleibt, in der innigen Einheit des Wesens. Nie würde der Sohn sich einüben, Vater zu werden, denn die Liebe hat für ihn nur Sinn, wenn der Vater ewig Vater bleibt." Cf. *Jo III*, 119. [91]. The Holy Spirit is the eternal catalyst for the intimacy between the Father and the Son: "Der Heilige Geist dagegen ist die ewige

is so mysterious and hidden that it can be communicated only when turned away or perhaps only by writing it out. It is a mystery that must be communicated, yet demands absolute trust in the love of the other who accepts it as mystery.

Therefore, the mystery in the relationship between man and woman is a manifestation of a more profound mystery in the exchange between the triune Persons. Certainly in conjugal, bodily experiences, each spouse learns much of oneself. Nonetheless, one can never definitively know how the other experiences their coming together; the mystery of the spousal union abides. Indeed, at the high point of conjugal giving over and receiving, there remains a certain "renunciation of cognition" [*Verzicht auf Erkenntnis*] of the other. However, precisely this renunciation builds a bridge to the other. Ultimately, the spousal mystery is similar to and fruit of the perpetual "renouncing" of the Son in adoration of the Father.¹²

God shares the intimacy and mystery of his divine life with believers and with Christian spouses in particular in order to stimulate their lives and to carry them beyond the realm of earth to the realm of Heaven. However, God does not play with believers like little children, giving them a peek at something and then hiding it. On the contrary, he reveals his innermost self so that they might be drawn into greater love for him.¹³ Both God's infinite love and human love retain some mystery. Above all, love's mysteries protect it from man's fragilities. Adrienne writes: "Because love is so vulnerable and defenseless, it needs the mystery that envelops it."¹⁴ In this way, God reserves the ultimate mysteries of his love for himself and invites Christian spouses to respect and revere them. God's gift of conjugal sexual love is wrapped in these same mysteries and it calls forth the same respect and reverence.

10.2.2 The Human Dimension of the Conjugal Act

As was shown, Christian spouses foster the mysterious character of their fundamentally sacramental relationship, and in so doing they nurture a spirit of vitality and intimacy in their marriage. At the same time, they are drawn deeper into the mysteries of

Anregung und Forderung der Intimität zwischen Vater und Sohn."

¹²Cf. *NB XII*, 143: "So gibt es von unserm Leiberfahrungen in der Liebe einen Aufstieg zum unfasslichen Geheimnis der Trinität. Schon in der menschlichen Liebeserfahrung liegt eine Steigerung zum Unbegreiflichen: wenn Liebende einander leibkosen, erscheint ihnen alles irgendwo faßlich, jeder weiß um den andern. Wenn es zum Akt kommt, tritt der Gegensatz hervor: was weiß das Weib vom Manne, wenn sein Same sich sammelt und ausfließt? Was weiß der Mann, wie das Weib diesen Samen empfängt? Auf dem Höhepunkt der Hingabe und Hinnahme liegt ein vollkommener Verzicht auf Erkenntnis des andern, und gerade dieser Verzicht bildet die Brücke zum andern hinüber, den eigentlichen Vorgang. Das ist Gleichnis für das 'verzichtende' Verharren des Sohnes in der Anbetung des Vaters, das 'verzichtende' In-Distanz-Halten des Sohnes den Vater. Die Gegenständlichkeit der drei Personen in der Dreieinigkeit ist Voraussetzung des immerwährenden Ereignisses der Liebe zwischen ihnen." With this, it is recalled what was noted in section 9.4.2 that it is in the "highest possible polarity" that the divine Persons are completely united. Cf. *NB XII*, 23.

¹³Cf. A. von Speyr, *Das Geheimnis des Todes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1989²), 40. Hereafter cited as *T. A. von Speyr, The Mystery of Death* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988) Transl. Graham Harrison, 49. "Vielmehr zeigt er, um uns anzuspornen, um in unser Leben ein Ferment einzusenken, eine Verheißung über alle Zeit hinaus, etwas von seiner Ewigkeit."

¹⁴*Jo I*, 60. [51].

God. In other words, certain mysteries remain between husband and wife, but these same mysteries point to the authenticity of the divine origin of their union. One way that spouses reveal their love for each other is in the conjugal act. However, even in this powerful union of body and spirit, in this “spiritual embodiment” of the spouses, not everything is revealed. Some things remain a mystery. In this subsection, Adrienne’s reflections on the conjugal act as a spiritual-bodily experience will be discussed from the perspective of the man, of the woman and, lastly, of the spouses together.

Adrienne emphasizes that the *man* must understand and lead the conjugal act within the whole framework of his office as leader.¹⁵ In this way, Adrienne places the conjugal act in the context of Ephesians 5, 21-33 where Paul writes that husbands should love their wives “as Christ loved the Church” (v. 25) and “as their own bodies” (v. 28). In other words, the husband loves his body as Christ loved his Body, the Church. Jesus loved his human body because it was begotten by his Father, formed in his Mother’s womb and allowed him to carry out his mission. In an act of infinite love, the incarnate Son gave his body over for the Redemption of all men and women. Therefore, the man’s love for his body is not some egotistical form of self-love, but a selfless love that moves him to give himself over completely to the woman.

In leading the woman, the *man* is to keep in mind that the primary focus of their union is to be the spiritual fruitfulness that can be brought forth and not the mere satisfaction of the bodily organs.¹⁶ The man is gifted by God with potency [*Potenz*], but his potency is bestowed on him only in order that be given over to the woman. Receiving the man’s potency, the woman helps the man to “form his seed” and to realize what he is capable of.¹⁷ However, even though the man leads in love, it does not follow that the woman’s love is merely passive. On the contrary, her love is “actively receptive.”¹⁸ It

¹⁵Cf. *NB XII*, 48: “Der Mann darf den Geschlechtsakt nicht als eine isolierte Tat ansehen, sondern muß ihn im Rahmen seines ganzen Führeramtes verstehen und verwalten.”

¹⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 57.139-140. Cf. *Chr*, 67-70. Cf. *HI*, 24-25. While the man’s genital organs are external, the woman’s are internal. The externality of the man’s genital organs point to his leadership role: he is the one who reveals himself to the woman drawing her forth from her hiddenness. “Auch der körperlichen Verfassung von Mann und Frau entspricht es, daß der Mann bei der Frau das Verborgene sucht und selber das Offenbare gibt.”

¹⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 32: “Der Mann hat seine Potenz von Gott; er setzt Akte, die Gott ihm zu setzen gegeben hat, und zwar in einer Selbständigkeit, die ihm von Gott mitverliehen wird. Aber er besitzt die Wirkung seines Aktes in der Frau; indem sie seine Potenz zur Auslösung bringt, quittiert sie sie gleichsam; ohne sie wüßte er nicht, was er vermag.” Cf. *Pa*, 78. [88]: “Den Samen, den der Mann der Frau gibt, hat er auf sie hin gesammelt [...] Es gibt auch dies, daß der Mann, der sich in seiner Phantasie mit der Frau befaßt, der er bald seinen Samen schenken will, mehr Samen erhält, als wenn er sich nicht mit ihr beschäftigt hätte, so daß die Frau ihm zur Formung seines Samens hilft.” Part of this citation was seen above, but in a different context. In section 9.3.4, it was noted how the Lord forms the Church with his Mother in view, similar to how the man forms his seed with the woman in view.

¹⁸Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, “Ein Wort zu ‘*Humanae Vitae*,’” 123. [216]: “Dennoch bleibt, auch wenn man von allen antiken Gesellschaftssystemen, von allen früheren und heutigen biologischen Einsichten absieht, doch eines wahr: daß der Mann im Geschlechtsakt initiativ, führend, gestaltend ist, während die Liebe der Frau--wenn auch nicht passiv, sondern auf ihre Weise ebenso aktiv--doch wesentlich rezeptiv ist.”

responds to the "awakening" of the man and is called forth into fruitfulness.¹⁹ Finally, the man gives himself completely over to the woman in such a way that he surpasses what he believed he was capable of.²⁰ At this point, the man is no longer the "demanding one" [*Fordernder*], but the "one given over" [*Hingebener*]; he experiences the giving over of his potency within the woman's attitude of giving over [*Hingabe*].²¹

While the man experiences the loving embrace of the woman's body and spirit, the woman experiences the loving embrace of the man's body and spirit. In the man's caresses, the woman feels her whole person, body and spirit, being awakened. Yet, all that is awakened in her, even those feelings and sensations of which she was not heretofore conscious, has meaning only within the context of her love for the man.²² Receiving the man's seed, the woman feels a desire to give it over to God. Adrienne describes the woman's experience in terms of a prayer: "Your God has become my God, your God, who stands beside you and has given you the seed; in your seed I have received his seed. And I must give this seed again to my God, who gives it back to your God."²³ The expressions "my God, your God" may sound somewhat strange. However, it is important to recall Adrienne's understanding that each spouse nurtures his or her own intimate relationship with God. Adrienne shows, therefore, that it is precisely in the moment of sexual intimacy

¹⁹Cf. Sc, 73-74: "Sicher ist dabei, daß der Mann führend ist, das Weib geführt, der Mann den Kern zur Fruchtbarkeit besitzt und diese in der Frau sich erfüllt. Die Frau muß sich durch den Mann zur Fruchtbarkeit führen lassen." Cf. HI, 41: "Es braucht die Liebe des Mannes, um die Fruchtbarkeit der Frau zu erwecken." Taken in the strict literal sense, Adrienne's words regarding the man "awakening" the woman's fruitfulness seem naive. Probably they are meant more figuratively. Similar to the way that the woman helps the man become aware of his potency, the man leads the woman to become more aware of her fruitfulness. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Ein Wort zu 'Humanae Vitae'," 123. [216]: "[...] in gewisser Weise kann man ganz negativ sagen, sie werde durch den Mann irgendwie zu sich selbst, zur Fülle ihres weiblichen Selbstbewußtseins erweckt. Diese Initiative des Mannes ist etwas Primäres, das den ganzen Prozeß der weiblichen Fruchtbarkeit auslöst, auch wenn man über die Zufälligkeit und den peripheren und transitorischen Charakter der männlichen Zeugungsfunktion lächeln kann, der in der Tat in keiner Weise den Vergleich mit dem unerhörten Akt der Selbsthingabe Christi vergleichbar ist."

²⁰Cf. NB XII, 74-75. In his giving over, the man resembles one who accepts a call by the Lord: the Lord uses him in a way greater than he thought possible. "Anders gesagt: die erzeugte Kraft erweist sich beim Verlassen größer als das, was vorbereitet wurde. Behält der Mann sie zurück, so kann er sich irgendwie ein verengtes Bild von seiner Kraft machen. So kann ein Mensch, der sich von Gott gerufen weiß, sich aber verweigert, gleichsam eine Bilanz dessen aufstellen, was er Gott anbieten kann: seine Jugend, seine Begabung usf. Wird er aber von Gott genommen, dann verfügt er über keinerlei Bilanz mehr: alles ist ganz anders, größer und einfacher."

²¹Cf. NB XII, 64: "Die spontane Enthüllung des Mannes fördert deshalb die Hingabe der Frau, während die Enthüllung der Frau das Fordern des Mannes fördert. Er versteht seine Forderung besser angesichts der enthüllten Frau [...] sobald er durch die ihm verliehene Vollmacht die Forderung in der Hingabe durchgesetzt hat, ist er kein Fordernder mehr, sondern ein Hingebener. Es ist also nicht alles damit erledigt, daß er seine Forderung durchgesetzt hat, er muß vielmehr den letzten Sinn seines Forderns in der Haltung der Frau selbst erfahren."

²²Cf. NB XII, 44-45: "Der Leib der Frau erwacht gleichsam unter den Liebkosungen des Mannes: einmal dieser Teil, dann jener, die Liebkosung meint jeweils den ganzen Leib, nein: die ganze Person, und so erwachen die Teile` nur im Angerufensein des Ganzen: die Frau ist es, die im Anruf des Mannes erwacht und lebt. Und im ganzen Anruf erwachen Teile` von ihr, von denen sie gar kein Bewußtsein hatte, und die für sie keinen Sinn haben außer in der Liebe zum Mann."

²³Cf. NB XII, 114.

that something of the other's spiritual relationship with God is revealed to one's spouse.

Adrienne stresses that even though the spouses have consummated their union, they retain something of their virginal character. Indeed, each time the spouses come together to consummate their love for each other, there should be something virginal about their love. Although the spouses are not virgin in a bodily way, they have a spiritual virginity about them that is preserved and protected. If the spouses continue to relate to each other in true love, the time of courtship becomes an abiding form of their relationship.²⁴ The *virginal meaning of the body*, as was shown in Chapter 9, can be traced back to the original synthesis of virginal and bodily fruitfulness in Paradise.

Adrienne's doctrine on the *virginal meaning of the body* is similar to John Paul's teaching on matrimonial *continence*. While Adrienne's doctrine emphasizes more man's paradisaal ancestry and inherent virginity, the Holy Father's doctrine stresses the importance of the virtues and man and woman's inherent nuptiality. However, as has been shown, virginity and nuptiality are two sides of the same coin. John Paul II clarifies that the proper spirit of matrimonial continence is founded on *Ephesians* 5, 21 ("Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ"). In addition, he stresses that continence, far from being an isolated virtue, is practiced along with prudence, justice, fortitude and, above all, charity. Most importantly, continent love, especially when it takes on the form of periodic abstinence, enriches rather than impoverishes affective human love.²⁵

²⁴Cf. *Ep*, 188-189. [228-229]: "Sie sollte immer diejenige bleiben, der der Mann in der Werbung sich zugewendet hat und die das Geschenk der Brautenschaft von ihm empfängt. Sie sollte die Werbung nicht als einen vergänglichen Augenblick betrachten, der bald anderen, wichtigeren Dingen Platz macht, sondern jenen Augenblick zu einer bleibenden Form ihres Lebens machen." Cf. *Ep*, 193. [234]. Cf. *HI*, 25: "Die Demütigung, daß sie durch ihn geöffnet worden ist, hat er vergessen; sie ist weider intakt, für ihn ist sie jedesmal Jungfrau." Adrienne speaks of the "virginity" of the body mainly in terms of the woman, that is, how the man should treat the woman. However, it is contended here that the man has this virginity as well. Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 52-53. Scola speaks of this *virginal meaning of the body* in terms of *detachment* between the spouses. The capacity to practice a certain detachment in relation to the other is a positive giving of oneself that is founded on Christ's virginal giving: "Non c'è vero amore tra un uomo e una donna, non si dà comunione autentica anche tra marito e moglie se non si sperimenta, persino in questo amore che fa dei due una sola carne, un certo distacco. [...] Questa modalità di rapporto può essere giustamente chiamata verginità cristiana. Essa consiste nella capacità, donata per grazia alla libertà, di un *possesso vero della realtà di distacco*, a imitazione della modalità con cui Cristo ha vissuto ogni rapporto e ora possiede il destino di ogni uomo." Furthermore, Scola ties this virginity of the spouses to Christ's giving of Mary and John to each other under the Cross. With this, he builds a bridge between the *virginal meaning of the body* and Adrienne's description of Mary and John as the archetypal couple of marriage (Cf. subsection 9.3.3): "Qui nasce---come bene ci descrive il Vangelo di Giovanni, con la consegna come suo figlio, del discepolo prediletto, a Maria, in questo caso prototipo della Chiesa---una nuova fecondità, per nulla asessuata." Thus, Mary and John, both bridal and virginal, are the prototypical models of the *virginal meaning of the body*.

²⁵Cf. John Paul II, "La continenza protegge la dignità dell'atto coniugale" in *Uomo e donna lo credò*, 481-483. Cf. *HV*, 21: "But self-discipline of this kind [periodic continence] is a shining witness to the chastity of husband and wife and, so far from being a hindrance to their love for one another, transforms it by giving it a more truly human character."

In the conjugal act, each *spouse* desires to encounter oneself in the person of the other.²⁶ Above all, the conjugal act is not a selfish exercise of bodily self-gratification. While it is true that the body and spirit are intertwined, true enrichment occurs when one gives one's spirit, not just one's body, over to the other. Even though the conjugal act is an encounter of the spouses' bodies, the most enduring and enriching exchange comes about through the sharing of each spouse's spirit. And most often, as noted above, this exchange remains beyond the realm of verbalization and is veiled in mystery. Adrienne notes that man and woman differ in the mutual giving over of body and spirit. While the man gives over his body spiritually, the woman gives over her spirit bodily. Adrienne explains that the woman allows herself to be introduced to the man's body gently through his spirit, just as the Church is introduced to the nakedness of the Lord.²⁷ The distinction between the man's "bodily-spiritual giving over" and the woman's "spiritual-bodily giving over" refers to the ontological difference between male and female sexuality.²⁸

10.2.3 The Christo-Ecclesial Dimension of the Conjugal Act: Confession and Eucharist

In her "theology of the sexes," Adrienne underscores that conjugal love must not only be considered in its human dimension, but also in its *Christian, ecclesial* and *Christological* dimensions or, in other words, in its *christo-ecclesial* dimension. If man and

²⁶Cf. *Jo I*, 310. [237]. In "encountering himself in the woman," the man resembles the Father who does not merely want his own voice to be repeated back to him from the world; he desires to encounter the world through the Son. When Adrienne speaks of "encountering oneself in the other" from the point of view of the man, it is applied here to the woman as well. Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Ein Wort zu 'Humanae Vitae,'" 124. [217]. Von Balthasar explains that Christ gives himself over to the point that the Church comes forth from him and exists beside him. Yet, precisely at this moment, Christ finds himself again in the Church. He had to give himself completely to find himself again in the Church. So too the man loves his wife as his own body only if he gives over to her in a completely unconditional way, so that he can see in her all that he has given over: his whole self.

²⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 12: "Aber indem der Mann geistig zu einem Leib wird, muß im Physischen die Frau ihren Geist hergeben: sie soll ihre Zustimmung dazu geben, ein Leib mit dem Mann zu sein. In diese Zustimmung, nackter Leib für den Mann zu sein, muß sie durch den Geist des Mannes schonend eingeführt werden, so wie die Kirche durch den Herrn in die Hüllenlosigkeit eingeführt wird." Cf. *Ep*, 193. [235]. Adrienne explains that the woman becomes one with the love that the man has for his body: "Und wenn der Mann sich ein Weib nimmt, dann muß dieses Weib in die gleiche Liebe einbezogen werden, die innige Liebe des Dienstes zu Gott ist. Da das Weib ein Fleisch ist mit dem Mann, muß es eins werden mit der Liebe, die der Mann zu seinem Leib hat."

²⁸Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 35: "La differenza tra uomo e donna, e quindi la loro relazione coniugale, non è riconducibile a un semplice problema di ruoli e di divisione di mansioni ma esige di essere compresa ontologicamente." Psychologists have also noted differences in male and female sexuality. Cf. R. Muchielli, *Psicologia della vita coniugale*, 37. Cf. Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953) 687-689. Cf. Hélène Deutsch, *La Psychologie des Femmes, Enfance et Adolescence* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1964) 240-276. For example, the woman is generally less sensitive than the man to visual or imaginative stimuli that precede sexual activity. Furthermore, for the most part, the woman is less likely than the man to seek sexual activity merely for sexual satisfaction. In addition, a woman's sexuality is more restrained and spiritualized than a man's. In general, the man's sexuality is characterized more as an *activity*, while the woman's sexuality resembles more a *state*.

woman are inserted into the Christ-Church union, then this insertion should be reflected in marriage and in the acts of marriage. As noted by *Gaudium et Spes* 48, the love between man and woman is assumed into divine love and sanctified. Ultimately, there is no contradiction between divine and human love; both are meant to exist in complete harmony and are to grow together. For this reason, all that constitutes conjugal-familial life can have the effects of grace: conversations between family members, family prayer, the different talents and gifts that each family member possesses and shares with the others and the bodily-spiritual encounter of spousal conjugal love.

Inserted in the Christ-Church union, the spouses are signs of the presence of Christ in his Church²⁹ and together with their children make up the “domestic Church.”³⁰ Taking seriously the “incarnation” of the spouses into the *Christo-ecclesial* dimension, Adrienne views the spousal sexual relationship through the prism of that which grafts the spouses into the Christ-Church union: the sacraments of Eucharist and confession. By drawing analogies between the conjugal act, confession and Eucharist, Adrienne sheds light on the spiritual fruitfulness of conjugal love.

In drawing an analogy between the conjugal act and the sacrament of *confession*, Adrienne notes that confession resembles the conjugal act in at least three ways. First, both confession and the conjugal act are *acts of self-revelation*. In the conjugal act, each spouse gives oneself over to the other without reserve in an act of naked, self-revelation. Thus, in their self-revelation, the spouses resemble the penitent who stands figuratively naked before God.³¹ Second, the conjugal act and confession are both *acts of entrustment*. Just as the penitent entrusts his sins to the confessor with the understanding that the secret of the confessional will be maintained, so too the woman in her nakedness of body and spirit entrusts herself to the man who must protect and guard the mystery of her being.³² Third, the conjugal act and sacramental confession are both *confessional acts*. In confession, the penitent does not know how much impurity, in the eyes of God, he has collected from one confession to the next. Nonetheless, he confesses all the sins that come to mind in his examination of conscience. The Lord, in his mercy, forgives all the penitent’s sins: those he confesses and those he forgets to confess. Similarly, with the conjugal act, the spouses do not know how much impurity they bring to the act. Still, they “confess” everything; each gives oneself completely to the other. Ultimately, God’s grace penetrates and purifies both

²⁹Cf. Ligier, *Il matrimonio*, 215: “Di fronte alla sposa, il parlare, l’agire dello sposo rende presente Cristo; parimenti, il parlare, l’agire della sposa rende presente allo sposo l’agire della Chiesa stessa. Essendo presenti l’uno all’altra, sono l’uno per l’altra *segni* della presenza di Cristo. Come il sacerdote davanti all’assemblea, essi rappresentano Cristo e rendono presente la Chiesa.”

³⁰Cf. *LG*, 11; *FC*, 49. The family as a “domestic Church” will be discussed in more detail in subsection 10.3.3.

³¹Cf. *NB XII*, 160: “Beichte als Wille, vor Gott nackt zu sein.” Cf. *Hl*, 43: “Es gibt im Akt auch eine Art ‘Beichte’ der Frau dem Mann gegenüber: alles Verkehrte wird im Akt herausgereinigt. Wird der Akt in wahrer Liebe vollzogen, so ist er ebensosehr Hingabe des Mannes als sein Besitz.”

³²Cf. *NB XII*, 130: “Die Forderung des Beichtvaters, daß ein Beichtkind seine ganze Seele entblöße, gehört hierher: in der Forderung, im Zuspruch, in der Absolution ist der Beichtvater handelnd, geradezu in Christus zeugend. So ist auch die leibliche und seelische Nacktheit der Frau dem Mann anvertraut: er fordert Enthüllung und freie Sicht. Aber er muß das Geschenk als ein Geheimnis bewahren in Entsprechung zum Beichtgeheimnis.”

confession and the conjugal act.³³

By the design of the Creator, man and woman "become one flesh" (*Gn* 2, 24) through the conjugal act and in so doing they imitate Christ who becomes one flesh with his Church. The conjugal act resembles sacramental confession as an act of self-revelation, entrustment and confession, because the Lord has already revealed himself, entrusted himself and confessed man's sins to the Father. On the Cross, the Lord revealed himself; he revealed his immense love and forgiveness. Christ entrusted himself completely to the Father and to the world. On the Cross, the Son manifested his entrusting vulnerability in the words that he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Mt* 27, 46) Finally, in "confessing" man's sins to the Father, the Lord bore the burden of our guilt even though he was completely innocent.

Adrienne also draws three analogies between the conjugal act and the *Eucharist*. First, Adrienne notes that the conjugal act and the Eucharist are similar in that both are *acts of body and spirit*. She observes that the bodily presence in the conjugal act witnesses to a love that is already physically and spiritually present, in the same way that the reception of the Eucharist testifies to the bodily presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.³⁴ Second, the conjugal act and the Eucharist are both *acts of superabundance*. Just as the woman receives much more from the man than what is needed to become pregnant, so too the communicant receives much more from the Lord than he uses. Yet in neither case is the "extra material" lost: the woman absorbs the excess seed and the communicant receives the grace of the Eucharist that touches his life in ways that he cannot fathom.³⁵ Third, the conjugal act is similar to the Eucharist in that both require *acts of renunciation*. The man, who gives his seed over to the woman in the conjugal act, "renounces" [*verzichtet*] his substance so that it may bring forth bodily and spiritual fruitfulness. Likewise, with the Eucharist, Christians renounce themselves to become what the Lord will make of them. In this, they imitate the Lord who renounces himself completely to become food for the world according to the Father's will.³⁶

³³Cf. *NB XII*, 109: "Ein Verkehr zwischen heiligen Christen wäre einer Beichte ähnlich. Man ahnt zumeist nicht, wie viel Umreines von einer Beichte zur andern sich angesammelt hat; man weiß es auch in der Ehe nicht. Der Strahl der Liebe reinigt beides auf beiden Seiten."

³⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 27: "Die leibliche Gegenwart beim Akt wird zum Beweis dafür, daß die Liebe auch sonst stets gegenwärtig ist, eine Liebe mit Leib und Seele. So wie der Empfang der Kommunion ein akthafter Beweis ist, daß Christus mit Leib und Seele immerfort Gegenwart war, ist und sein wird." Cf. *NB X*, 248: "Die Eucharistie wird zur vollkommenen Vermittlung zwischen Fleisch und Gebet. Im Geschlechtlichen: weder Raserei noch Kälte und Passivität. Sondern ein Akt der Übergabe und des Geschehenlassens. Wird dieser waagrechte Akt aufrecht gestellt, so ist er Gebet." Cf. *NB XII*, 14: "Für den Christen liegt das Sexuelle im Sakramentalen, nicht zuletzt im Eucharistischen eingebettet."

³⁵Cf. *NB XII*, 126: "Schon natürlicherweise empfängt die Frau vom Mann viel mehr als das strikt Notwendige: eine einzige Zelle würde zur Befruchtung genügen, unzählige strömen in sie ein. Nun ist es durchaus nicht so, daß der Rest 'veloreingeht,' normalerweise bleibt ein großer Teil des Samens in der Scheide der Frau und wird von ihr resorbiert. [...] Auch der Glaubende, der bei der Kommunion den Herrn empfängt, erhält viel mehr, als was er je verarbeiten kann. Er erhält nicht bloß sein 'nacktes,' Heil sondern eine himmlische Fülle, die---er weiß nicht wie---in ihn eingeht."

³⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 108. Cf. *IK*, 184: "Die leibliche Verbindung von Mann und Frau läßt die zwei ein Fleisch sein, wobei die leibliche Einheit Ausdruck einer schon bestehenden geistigen und, von Christen vollzogen, Ausdruck der Liebe Christi ist, die sich auch in der leiblichen Hingabe dem Willen des Vaters,

In the same way that the spouses imitate Christ “confessionally” in the conjugal act, they also imitate him “eucharistically.” The conjugal act is an act of body and spirit, superabundance and renunciation, because the Lord embodies all three of these in himself. He gives himself in body and spirit on the Cross, but remains with us, body and Spirit, in his Eucharist. Moreover, the Lord gives himself superabundantly; his grace pours out like water from a fire hydrant. We stand before the hydrant and try to take in all the grace we can. Still, because of our human weaknesses much grace is lost. Finally, the Lord renounces himself completely. On the Cross, he is abandoned by all. He possesses nothing, not even his cloak for which the soldiers gamble. He gives himself over completely without reserve.

In summary, the analogies that Adrienne von Speyr draws between the conjugal act and the sacraments of Eucharist and confession are not simply pious meditations. More importantly, in the chaste carrying out of the conjugal act, the spouses become what they receive in the sacraments of Eucharist and confession. Even though the conjugal act in itself is not a sacrament, it is an integral part of the marriage covenant. Hence, it is sanctified by God’s grace and it can bring grace to the marriage covenant just as the other acts of marriage do. Adrienne’s insights open the way to understanding that the spouses do not only *receive* the sacraments, but also that they themselves *are* a sacrament.³⁷ Each spouse must become “confessional” and “eucharistic” to the other. In short, they must imitate Christ who reveals, entrusts, and confesses, renouncing himself in body and spirit superabundantly.

10.2.4 The Trinitarian Dimension of the Conjugal Act

Adrienne underscores that in the *fruitfulness* of the conjugal act, Christian spouses witness to the fruitfulness of the Trinity. On the one hand, within the *Trinity*, the Father begets the Son and the Holy Spirit goes forth from both. Thus, the Spirit witnesses to the superabundant, atemporal and infinitely fruitful nature of trinitarian love. On the other hand, the *spouses* express their love for each other through the conjugal act that brings about spiritual and, God willing, physical fruitfulness. In an analogous way that the Spirit is a witness to the infinite love between the Father and Son, the spiritual and bodily fruitfulness of the conjugal act testifies to the fruitful love between husband and wife. Adrienne explains that the conjugal act can bring forth much fruitfulness *in the family*, in the form of children and a more profound spiritual life, and *in the Church*, in the form of conversions and vocations to the religious life and priesthood.³⁸

seinen Zwecken und Plänen in der von ihm geschaffenen Natur unterwirft.” Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, “Ein Wort zu ‘Humanae Vitae’,” 123-124. [217]. Von Balthasar points out that what the man’s giving over in the conjugal act remains infinitely small in comparison with the Lord’s giving over on the Cross: “Christus gibt nicht ein Weniges von seiner Substanz dahin, wie der Mann physiologisch im Akt, sondern seine ganze Substanz, so wie der ewige Vater, wenn er den Sohn zeugt, geradezu seine ganze göttliche Substanz dem Sohn übermacht, und beide sie nochmals in gemeinsamer Liebe ungeteilt dem Heiligen Geist übergeben.”

³⁷Cf. C. Rocchetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 8. Rocchetta explains this in anthropological and sacramental terms: “L’atto sacramentale del matrimonio non si pone *dopo* la realtà antropologica dell’incontro e del reciproco accettarsi e consegnarsi degli sposi, al contrario coincide con questa realtà, essendo la stessa comunione di amore tra un uomo e una donna battezzati che diviene sacramento.”

³⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 21-22. Adrienne describes the “being-two” of the spouses as “burst open” by the infinite nature of trinitarian grace: “Während der Sohn vom Vater gezeugt wird, geht aus beiden der Geist hervor. Nicht nachträglich. So wie in einem Akt reiner ehelicher Liebe nicht nur ein Kind entsteht, sondern

Although Adrienne gives no specific examples how the conjugal act can plant a seed that bears fruit in the form of conversions or vocations to the religious life or priesthood, several examples come to mind. Regarding conversions, it is not uncommon that a couple's child may convert to Catholicism through an acquaintance from school or some other experience. Often, the converted child, as a vibrant witness to the faith, not only serves as an instrument to bring his parents to conversion, but also other relatives and friends are moved by his courageous example to follow him into the Church. Regarding vocations to the priesthood or religious life, one could cite the example of the parents of St. Thérèse of Liseux, Louis and Zélie Martin. Altogether, they were gifted with nine children. Unfortunately, three of their children died within nine months of birth and a fourth, Héléne, died at five years of age. Of the remaining five children, all five became religious sisters³⁹ of which one became a Doctor of the Church. Before marriage, Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin had each considered a call to the religious life. However, they each discerned that God desired that they marry. Their obedience to God's call is clearly evident in the abundant spiritual and bodily fruitfulness that poured forth from their union.

However, Adrienne's statement that the conjugal act is fruitful for the family and the Church goes beyond examples that have bodily fruitfulness as the point of departure. Because Adrienne maintains that the primary fruitfulness of the conjugal act is always spiritual, it must be concluded that her statement likewise refers primarily to spiritual fecundity. Although some couples are not able to have their own biological children for one reason or another, they nonetheless effect much fruitfulness by living their marriage in a loving and giving spirit. Many childless couples bear fruit by adopting children, caring for the poor, visiting the sick, helping the handicapped and aiding those who struggle in life; in short, they are fruitful in many ways. These couples will bear fruit in ways that they never imagined were possible. However, they, as well as couples with children, must always grow deeper in their understanding that the spiritual fruitfulness of marriage remains of primary importance and must always be further cultivated. In this way, the fruitfulness of marital love can overflow into the gushing current of Christ's grace at work in his Church.⁴⁰

darüber hinaus etwas Geistiges für die Familie, für die Kirche, vielleicht Bekehrungen, Berufungen usw. Im Hervorgehen des Geistes erweist sich die schlechthinnige göttliche Fruchtbarkeit; die geistige Fruchtbarkeit einer reinen Ehe in die Kirche hinein erfolgt auf der Ebene der Dreieinigkeit Gottes: immer wird in der echten Liebe des Zweisein gesprengt in das 'Überhaupt' der Liebe." Cf. *Jo I*, 248. [192]. Cf. *NB XII*, 23. It is the Holy Spirit who brings about an "exchange of liveliness" in both the Trinity and the spouses. Adrienne describes the seed that the woman receives from the man to be a witness to the "liveliness of the Father." The fertilized egg, then, becomes a witness to the liveliness of the spouses. Just as the traits of the father and mother are united in the fertilized egg, so too the redemptive work of God in the world is a combined fruit of the Father's potency [*Potenz*] and the Son's pure and complete giving over [*Hingabe*] to the point of total powerlessness on the Cross [*Kreuzesohnmacht*]; the Holy Spirit unites both.

³⁹Cf. St. Thérèse of Liseux, *Story of a Soul* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996³) Transl. John Clarke, O.C.D., 7. As noted in *Chapter 1*, Adrienne would have been well familiar with the life of St. Thérèse, having translated her autobiography, *Histoire d'une âme: manuscrits autobiographiques*.

⁴⁰Adrienne herself was not able to have children. Although she was pregnant three times, each pregnancy ended in miscarriage. However, Adrienne was able to give much to the Church in the form of her work as a medical doctor, the co-founding of a secular institute and her spiritual writings. Regarding her work as a medical doctor, it is significant to recall here (from Chapter 1) that through her counsel, she dissuaded many women from obtaining abortions. Thus, in her witness to the precious gift of life and in her availability

While Adrienne draws analogies between trinitarian and spousal *fruitfulness*, she also draws analogies between the specific *Persons* of the Trinity, of Mary-Church and of the spousal relationship. On the one hand, she notes that the man resembles the Father, but also the Son. On the other hand, the woman resembles Mary, but also the Church. Regarding the *man*, Adrienne writes: "In particular, the man reveals Christ, and through Christ, God. In his seed, he points to the Son. In his might, potency and readiness, he points to the Father."⁴¹ Regarding the *woman*, Adrienne compares her to Mary who is drawn into the Son's mission. At the Annunciation, Mary finds herself drawn into something that towers over her; she is emptied out into participation in the "emptying out of the Son." Likewise, in the conjugal act, the woman can feel drawn into the man's giving over.⁴² Moreover, in giving herself over to the man, the woman resembles the Church who has no demands on the Lord. For three years the Lord preached the Gospel, exhorting others to follow him and give themselves over to him. But at the culminating moment of his earthly life, as he hung dying on the Cross, the Lord gives himself over completely to his Church. As the Church is to receive the Lord, so the woman is to receive the man.⁴³

Adrienne asserts that in its most perfect form, the conjugal act is to be understood in a trinitarian way where the man represents the Father, the woman, the Son and the child, the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the conjugal act is drawn so profoundly into trinitarian love that

to her patients (which might not have been feasible were she a homemaker caring for a large number of children), in an indirect way, it can be said that Adrienne brought about bodily fruitfulness in the lives of others. John Paul II gives a few examples how childless couples can bear much fruit for the Church. Cf. *FC*, 14: "It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children."

⁴¹Cf. *NB XII*, 32: "Der Mann offenbart im besonderen Christus und durch Christus hindurch Gott. In seinem Samen zeigt er auf den Sohn, in seiner Macht, Potenz, Bereitschaft zeigt er auf den Vater." Cf. *NB XII*, 72: "Im Hinblick auf seinen Samen ist der Mann Gleichnis des Vaters, im Hinblick auf sich selbst Gleichnis des Sohnes." Regarding the conjugal act, A. compares the man to the Father, who once he has set forth to create the world, he must continue until it is finished. In this mode, the woman (or Eve) symbolizes the quintessence of the paradisaical world that Adam assumes: "Das Weib sinnbildet hier den Inbegriff der aufnehmend, paradiesischen Welt, die den Adam aufnahm. So gibt es mitten in der Macht des göttlichen Erschaffens und des männlichen Zeugens eine Art Machtlosigkeit." Cf. *Jo I*, 310. [237]. As indicated in section 10.2.2, in desiring to "encounter himself in the woman," the man resembles the Father who does not merely want his own voice to be repeated back to him from the world but desires to encounter the world through the Son.

⁴²Cf. *NB XII*, 75: "Die Frau aber wird in diesem Augenblick durch den Mann in die Rolle Marias geführt. Maria steht inmitten eines Geschehens, das sie überragt, sie ausleert—aber ausleert als Teilhabe am Ausgeleertsein des Mannes, der in ihr zum Sohn wird."

⁴³Cf. *NB XII*, 65-66: "Die Kirche als Weib besitzt keinerlei Forderungen an den Herrn. Sie kann in ihrer Hingabe höchstens Forderungen des Herrn übernehmen (das Amt), um sie den Menschen bekanntzugeben. Eigene hat sie nicht." Cf. *NB XII*, 78: "Insofern ist sie vom Mann abhängig, hat auf sein Wort und seine Frage zu lauschen, so wie die Braut Kirche immerfort auf das Wort und seine Frage zu lauschen, wo wie die Braut Kirche immerfort auf das Wort und die Frage des Bräutigams Christus achtzugeben hat."

“this act must be marked [*signiert*] by the divine intention.”⁴⁴ Is not Adrienne von Speyr going too far when she draws analogies between the conjugal act and intratrinitarian life? How can the (often imperfect) carrying out of the conjugal act be analogous to the eternal, perfect giving and receiving between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit?

Although Adrienne does not develop at length the implications of the conjugal act-Trinity analogy, von Balthasar takes up her line of thought in his article on *Humanae Vitae*. He approaches the question from the standpoint of man and woman as an image of Christ's love for his Church which is made eternally present in the Eucharist. However, because the event of the Cross is fundamentally trinitarian, he shows how the analogy between the sexual giving of man and woman and Christ's begetting of his Church (which is also a giving over to the Father in the Holy Spirit) is the bridge to understanding the conjugal act-Trinity analogy. Von Balthasar describes the analogy:

As a divine Person, God the Father is eternally identical with his act of procreation, and of all creation only One is able to present to us a valid image of the Father: Jesus Christ, who creates the Church from the totality of his divine and human substance that he gives over on the Cross. The begetting, Church-creating might of Jesus Christ is his Eucharist, that over and beyond all times and places makes the Church forever present. This potency of Christ is the perfect image of the eternal Father precisely because neither Christ nor the Father holds anything back for himself or places any restrictions on his own self-giving over; they have no fear of losing themselves through this perfect outpouring and lavishing of themselves. Unlike the man physiologically in the conjugal act, Christ does not give just a little of his substance. No, Christ gives away his entire substance, just as the eternal Father, in begetting the Son, makes over to the Son his entire divine substance, and then again both of them give this substance over to the Holy Spirit, without division, in an act of communal love.

⁴⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 140-141: “In seiner vollkommensten Gestalt ist der Akt trinitarisch zu verstehen: der Mann kennzeichnet den Vater, die Frau den Sohn und das Kind den Geist. Vom Augenblick an, da die Gatten nach Empfang des Sakraments den Akt begehen dürfen und sollen, läßt Gott diesen Akt nicht im Ungewissen schweben; er nimmt ihn hinein in sein dreieiniges Leben. Also muß nach göttlicher Absicht dieser Akt auch dreieinig signiert sein. Eva---in ihrer massiven Konkretheit---steht irgendwie nah bei der Sünde und bedarf des Gegengewichts Maria, um sich von dieser Grenze fortzubewegen: Maria hat den Sohn durch den Geist empfangen, als Same des Vaters, und dies wird an ihr, auch ohne männlichen Akt und Begierlichkeit, sichtbar gemacht: es ist ein göttlicher Akt, dessen dreieinige Signatur völlig evident ist. Von Maria blickt man auf Eva zurück und entdeckt dort die Spuren der Analogien, um so mehr, als sich der gewöhnliche Geschlechtsakt, in der geistigen Haltung Marias vollzogen, von der Sünde wegbewegt.” Adrienne's observation that God “takes up [the conjugal act] into his trinitarian love” is similar to *GS*, 48 which notes that “authentic married love is caught up into divine love.” Adrienne's insight, which preceded *GS* by some twenty years, is more specific than the Vatican II document on two counts. First, not only is *married love* assumed, but the *intimate expression of married love*, that is, the *conjugal act* is assumed. Second, not only does *divine love* assume married love, but *trinitarian divine love* takes it up. Adrienne's assertion, therefore, *anticipates GS*, and at the same time, *goes beyond it* by carrying out its claims to their logical conclusions.

In the act of procreation, the man represents only a distant analogy to this trinitarian and christological event. Nonetheless, it is an analogy.⁴⁵

Therefore, although von Balthasar cites the dissimilarities between the two components of the analogy, he also underscores the similarities. The conjugal act-Trinity analogy remains valid as long as the dissimilarities are noted and oversimplification is avoided. Adrienne's articulation of the analogy is an attempt to describe the infinite mystery of conjugal love that finds its archetype in the giving over of Christ in his Eucharist.⁴⁶ The value of the conjugal act-Trinity analogy lies in its capacity to illuminate how conjugal love is an image of the love between the Persons of the Trinity. We will examine a related theme, the Trinity and the family, in subsection 10.2.10.

10.2.5 Obstacles to Fruitfulness: Egoistical Restrictions and Abortion

In a number of places, Adrienne writes of the destructiveness of *egoistical restrictions* [*egoistischen Restriktion*] and of *abortion*.⁴⁷ Above all, any aberration from total self-giving in marriage destroys the profound life-giving purpose of the conjugal act. Adrienne explains: "The sexual act is nothing less than the expression of the love between husband and wife in the Christian order. However, would this purpose be lost, then it would be degraded and lose its meaning and full beauty."⁴⁸

When spouses resort to unnatural means to stymie their physical fruitfulness, Adrienne asserts that there are number of negative consequences. They are summarized as follows:

- ▶ Spouses confuse the meaning of the sacrament and distance themselves from the life of the Church.
- ▶ With the perceived "danger" of pregnancy removed, extramarital relations are more easily entered into.

⁴⁵Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, "Ein Wort zu 'Humanae Vitae'," 123-124. [217-218].

⁴⁶Cf. S.L. Mahoney, *The Analogy Between the Eucharist and Marriage*, 264: "Eucharist has to do with initiating in the human sphere a divine, personal generativity, which will infinitely far surpass human sexuality yet, at the same time, will lend human sexuality an irreplaceable content as image of the deepest mystery of God."

⁴⁷Cf. NB XII, 104: "Wenn zwei in der Sünde oder wenigstens in einer egoistischen Restriktion sich lieben, bleiben eine Menge Schranken der Begierlichkeit bestehen, die ihrer Liebe den Unendlichkeitscharakter rauben." Adrienne's term "egoistical restrictions" would be synonymous with the more modern term "contraception." Any form of restriction whether it be *coitus interruptus*, the use of a prophylactic, pill or other device, limits not only the spouses' physical fruitfulness, but also their spiritual fruitfulness. Cf. NB XII, 73: "Im Augenblick des 'Zu-spät,' da der Same nicht mehr zurückgehalten werden kann, ist der Akt für den Mann vollzogen, auch wenn er physisch noch nicht abgelaufen ist. Der Mann wird 'kontemplativ,' Kontemplation ist dem Akt immanent. [...] Der Übergang in die Kontemplation ist ein Gehorsam; Ungehorsam wäre an dieser Stelle z.B. ein Rückzug im letzten Moment, coitus interruptus." Cf. XII, 24.58-59.67.107.157. Cf. *Casti Connubii*, par. 54-55 or AAS 559-560 (1930): "Since therefore the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious. [...] As St. Augustine notes, 'Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Juda, did this and the Lord killed him for it.'" Cf. *Humanae Vitae*, par. 14: "Similarly excluded is any action, which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation---whether as an end or as a means."

⁴⁸*Chr*, 65.

- ▶ Egoism creeps into the marital relationship.
- ▶ Spiritual growth that normally comes about with the presence of children does not materialize when a couple refuses children.
- ▶ Divorce is more likely.
- ▶ It is more difficult to raise few children rather than many, because children in smaller families often grow up to be spoiled and egocentric.
- ▶ Children of small families are often less ably equipped to face future life struggles.
- ▶ When spouses are open to bringing forth new life, their openness binds them closer together; it has a life-affirming effect on their other children.⁴⁹

By illuminating the evils of misused and egotistical love, Adrienne underlines the inevitable destruction of the marital bond in its physical, spiritual, emotional and other aspects. Her warnings of the dangers of egoistical restrictions foreshadow Pope Paul VI's prophetic words in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* when he warned against the "slippery slope" of contraception.⁵⁰

Regarding *abortion*, Adrienne affirms that the child is never a random result of the bodily union between man and woman. Even in the case where the mother's health is threatened by her pregnancy, the mother should not consider abortion. Any doctor who would recommend such a plan of action would stand in direct contradiction to the Church's teaching against abortion. Adrienne explains that the Church's law is valid for both Catholics and non-Catholics. Thus, even when faced with difficulty, the Church cannot refrain from declaring the truth. By lending understanding and assistance, she brings her children to growth in faith even when sacrifice and renunciation are involved.⁵¹

⁴⁹Cf. *NB X*, 126-127. In linking the thwarting of physical fecundity with the limiting of spiritual fecundity, Adrienne anticipates the thought of John Paul II. One of the most profound contributions of the Holy Father's defense of *Humanae Vitae* lies in his insight that spouses who intend to preserve the unitive aspect of their relationship by frustrating the procreative, not only impede physical fruitfulness, but also thwart the unitive aspect of their love. Cf. Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae, A Generation Later* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1991), 256. Cf. *FC*, 32. When couples separate the unitive and procreative, "they act as 'arbiters' of the divine plan and they 'manipulate' and degrade human sexuality---and with it themselves and their married partner---by altering its value of total self-giving."

⁵⁰Cf. *HV*, 17: "Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for the artificial restriction of increases in the birth-rate. Let them first consider how easily this course of action can lead to the way being wide open to marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards."

⁵¹Cf. *Chr*, 115-123. Certainly, the situation of the mother whose pregnancy threatens her physical health is never easy and simple to understand. Carlo Caffarra once discussed the situation during a lecture. He posed the situation of a recently widowed mother of six children who was pregnant with her seventh child. The pregnancy was a difficult one and threatened her life. Since the soon-to-be-born child would not have the benefit of knowing his deceased father and since the other six children would certainly need their mother, would not it be better for the mother to abort her child in order to spare her own life so that she could raise the other six children? Especially since there is no guarantee that the mother or the child in her womb would survive parturition? First of all, there is no way to pre-determine absolutely the outcome of such a situation. It is to be placed into God's hands. Certainly, it is not only a great privilege for a woman to bear a child, but also it requires a true heroism. Second, it is precisely the heroic act of the mother, in this case, that is going

10.2.6 Abstinence and Natural Family Planning

When spouses give God power over both their consummation and abstinence, they are consoled to know that the Lord watches over and protects their union.⁵² Even though abstention from sexual intercourse, which is necessary in the weeks before and after parturition, is a form of renunciation and fasting,⁵³ it invigorates conjugal love.⁵⁴ Adrienne underlines that abstinence during other times in marriage should only be endured for serious reasons. Moreover, under no circumstances should spouses enter into marriage with the purpose of limiting the number of children that God chooses to bestow on them.⁵⁵

Adrienne's strong words against limiting family size seem to indicate that she would be opposed to *natural family planning* or periodic abstinence in order to space childbirth. As noted above, periodic abstinence is endorsed by the Church in several documents, including *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio*.⁵⁶ Does Adrienne oppose Church teachings in this case? Mostly, Adrienne wants to emphasize that each spouse ought to give oneself over completely to the other without reservation. Indeed, this "giving over" or *Hingabe* is a key underpinning of her "theology of the sexes." Moreover, in giving oneself over to the other, one gives oneself over to God. In this way, the self-giving of the spouses is extended into the divine realm. In giving themselves to God, the spouses allow him to enter into their marriage union and determine how and when it will be blessed. Thus, on the one hand, if husband and wife abstain periodically from sexual relations in a spirit of love and self-giving and in accordance with Church teaching, they can be comforted that God will bless their union. This couple will learn something of God's grace in abstention as well as in consummation. Furthermore, in the spouses' abstention, they will experience renunciation as a way of participating in the Lord's Cross.⁵⁷ On the other hand, should a

to be remembered and prove to be the most fruitful for the family. The giving over of the mother to the point of her own death, in order that it be possible that her child may live, is truly a Christ-like act. How could the children respect their mother if she were to abort her child?

⁵²Cf. *Jo III*, 405. [303]. Cf. *Jn* 17, 1.

⁵³Cf. *NB XII*, 195-197.

⁵⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 191-192.

⁵⁵Cf. *NB X*, 127. [den. 2168]: "In einer echten Notlage kann eine Einschränkung sich aufdrängen. Aber eine katholische Ehe sollte nie in Voraussicht der Anwendung solcher Methoden geschlossen werden." Cf. *XII*, 47: "Die Frau hat ihre Periode, auch der Mann hat gewisse Rhythmen in seiner Fruchtbarkeit, Erregbarkeit. Diese sind weitgehend subjektiv bedingt oder individuell verschieden, auch durch Angewöhnungen bestimmt. Der Mann soll aus seiner 'Regel' kein Gesetz für die Frau machen, noch weniger sollen beide nach irgendwelchen außerhalb der Liebe liegenden physiologischen Gesetzmäßigkeiten ihren Verkehr regeln."

⁵⁶Cf. subsection 8.2.8. Cf. *FC*, 32; *HV*, 16: "If therefore there are reasonable grounds for spacing births arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that then married people may take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and use their marriage at precisely those times that are infertile, and in this way control birth, a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which we have just explained."

⁵⁷Cf. Joseph B. Stanford, "Sex, Naturally" in *First Things* 97 (November 1999) 28-33. Stanford, a Mormon physician, traces his own transformation from a contraceptive-prescribing doctor to a strong proponent of natural methods of birth regulation. He comments on the difficulties as well as the advantages of natural methods: "The periodic abstinence used in NFP to avoid pregnancy can be challenging, even at times very difficult, but it strengthens marriages as both spouses put the needs of the other—and their marriage—ahead of their own needs. It takes faith to use NFP: if not faith in God, then at least faith in the strength of

couple decide responsibly not to practice periodic abstinence, but to give their physical fruitfulness completely over to God's providence, they will know his providential grace and blessings in a special way.

10.2.7 Pregnancy and Parturition: The Experience of the Spouses

God's gift of children brings much transformation in the life of the spouses, especially if it is the first child. Often, the spouses must make preparations for the coming child: buy baby clothes, prepare a crib and a room for the child. While the mother experiences much physical change in herself, she also undergoes changes in her spiritual outlook. The father, too, is led to new spiritual understandings. Adrienne notes that with the conjugal act, the man is the leader. However, in pregnancy and birth, the woman leads the man. While the woman gains a more profound understanding of God and Christian matrimony in her own physical, emotional and spiritual experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, she also leads the man to new discoveries. Focusing on the spiritual dimensions of pregnancy and birth, Adrienne ties these important events to the life of Mary, the Lord and the Church just as she draws analogies between the conjugal act and trinitarian and ecclesial life.

Adrienne observes that during the time of pregnancy, the *man*, who has entrusted his seed to the woman, is drawn into the "contemplation of pregnancy" through the woman. In her spiritual responsibility for the infant growing in her womb, the woman opens the man to the more profound mysteries of pregnancy and leads him to understand his fatherly responsibilities.⁵⁸ Like Joseph, who cared for Mary during her pregnancy, the man serves the woman in a spirit of discretion and affection. Moreover, because the woman is in service of the child, the man comes to understand that he serves both mother *and* child.⁵⁹ Although there are obvious differences between the man and Joseph, the man must model his care of his pregnant wife after Joseph who incarnates the heavenly Father's spirit in his loving care of his pregnant Bride. In a striking statement, Adrienne writes of Joseph: "He will do for the body of Mary in the spirit of the Father, what the Father in heaven does for her spirit."⁶⁰

one's marital relationship and in the good will and ability of each spouse to yield to the gentle discipline of NFP for the common good of their marriage and family. This faith is well rewarded: there is a strong 'courtship/honeymoon' effect among NFP users, even after years of marriage. [...] I have known couples in my practice using contraception who routinely have daily intercourse, but these couples do not have anywhere near as satisfying a 'sex life' as those couples I see who use NFP." (pp. 29-30)

⁵⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 192. Pregnancy is a time of *contemplation* compared to the *action* of the conjugal act. Cf. *NB XII*, 118-119. A certain mystery envelops pregnancy similar to the mystery that surrounds the first thirty years of the Lord's life. Only with the beginning of the Lord's public ministry, did he begin to reveal his mission. For thirty years prior to his ministry, Jesus lived a hidden life in the bosom of the Holy Family. In a similar way, the birth of the child makes visible the fruit of the conjugal act, that was carried out in mystery and hiddenness nine months earlier. Cf. *NB XII*, 188-189. Cf. *Jo I*, 281. [215-216]. Here A. notes that during pregnancy the man can experience a feeling of separation from his child.

⁵⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 189: "Die Frau wird sich vielleicht weiterhin vor ihm entblößen, aber nicht mehr für ihn, sondern im Dienst am Kinde; der Mann wird ihren Leib nicht mehr begehren, sondern ihm dienen, durch Handreichungen, durch Bereitung eines Bades, oder durch Stützen während der Wehen usw."

⁶⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 193: "Der Mann wird auch irgendwie in die Rolle Josephs während der Schwangerschaft Marias gestellt. Sie selbst hat den Sohn des himmlischen Vaters in sich, hat von ihm Väterlich für die Zeit ihres Lebens miterhalten. Und doch muß Joseph diesen Vater auf Erden und im konkreten Alltag

In other words, it is as if the Father who cast the shadow of his Holy Spirit on Mary so that she could bear the Son, now passes on his paternal role to Joseph who must embody his Spirit. Therefore, Joseph must not only be a father *to* Jesus, but also he must be a father *for* Mary, the Mother of God. In this way, Joseph's fatherhood responds to Mary's motherhood. God willed that his Son have both a earthly mother and father. Far from the uncaring, distant father who is sometimes depicted in medieval paintings of the Nativity, Joseph is this father who is completely available to Mary and Jesus and leads the Holy Family in his loving patience, steadiness and wisdom. All fathers should strive to follow his example.

Certainly, the expectant mother undergoes different experiences than the father. For her part, the *woman* feels a strong closeness to her child during pregnancy. She realizes that she is not only the mother of her child's body, but also his spirit and that the child is fruit of the man's body and spirit.⁶¹ Already she prays with her child while he grows in her womb.⁶² Adrienne describes how a mother builds up a "surplus of love" for her child during pregnancy that will carry her through the future good and difficult times.⁶³ As she nears the time of childbirth, the woman, who felt physically and spiritually "filled up" by her husband in the conjugal act, now feels a strong desire to "expel him."⁶⁴ In the pain of the contractions, she experiences something of the husband's potency during the conjugal act. She had sensed the man's excitement before, but now she experiences it first hand in her body.⁶⁵ Adrienne contrasts the experiences of the man and of the woman in the *conjugal act* and in *parturition*:

stellvertreten. [...] Er [Joseph] wird für den Leib Marias im Geist des Vaters tun, was der Vater im Himmel für ihren Geist tut."

⁶¹Cf. *NB XII*, 204.

⁶²Cf. *NB XII*, 119: "Wenn eine Mutter für ihr Kind betet, das sie in ihrem Schoß spürt oder nach der Geburt betrachtet, von dem sie bereits eine lebendige Erfahrung hat, dann bindet sie die Worte, die sie Gott anvertraut: sie werden gleichsam zurückbezogen, um dem Kinde zu dienen; ja sie können Wurzeln des Gebetes im Kinde durch seine Verbundenheit mit der Mutter mit." Cf. *MH*, 57, [52]. It was shown in section 9.3.1 how Jesus formed Mary's prayer while in her womb and how she might have prayed during pregnancy.

⁶³Cf. *MH*, 75, [70]: "Jede Mutter stellt ihrem Kind einen Überschuß zur Verfügung, eine Art unbegrenzten Kredit. Jede Mutter hat so viel mütterliche Liebe, daß auch das liebendste Kind sie ihr nicht zurückgeben kann---, jetzt, während der Zeit der Erwartung, ohnedies nicht. Sie hält diesen Überschuß für das Kind, für seine kommende guten und bösen Tage bereit."

⁶⁴Cf. *NB XII*, 205-206: "Irgendeinmal hat sie den Gedanken gefaßt: weil der Mann mich leiblich erfüllt hat, bin ich ihm gegenüber leiblich verschlossen; das Kind beansprucht den ganzen Raum." Adrienne's comments on the woman's spiritual and psychological state during pregnancy and parturition are, to say the least, interesting. Are they an accurate description of most women's experiences? It would be difficult to answer this question without some scientific research. However, Adrienne's portrayal of pregnancy and birth does seem to represent the experiences of some women. From which source would Adrienne have received such knowledge? Although she was pregnant three times herself during her first marriage, all three pregnancies ended in miscarriages. Thus, she does not give an account of parturition based on personal experience. It is more likely that she received her knowledge from her consultations with patients in her medical practice, from her own research, as well as from her unique charism of "being admitted into" a particular mystery as noted in *Chapter 1*, *Chapter 3* (section 3.3) and *Chapter 8* (section 8.3).

⁶⁵Cf. *NB XII*, 212. In her pain the woman recalls her nearness to Eve who is never so much "rib" as in the moment of being "born" from the side of Adam. Cf. *Jo III*, 55, [44]. A. writes here that the woman describes her labor pains to the man, so that he can share in the mystery of love that encompasses them. This is similar to the Lord telling his disciples of his suffering, so that they can share in its fruitfulness.

The man opens the woman from the outside; he penetrates inward in order to initiate the woman's movement (in giving birth) from inside outward. Each movement belongs to the other; each is both an end and a beginning. In this, there is also a dialectic of onesomeness and twosomeness: the man takes advantage of the woman's ability to conceive and give birth in order to be fruitful in her. By exercising his male role in the conjugal act, he shows the woman her power. While the woman, in conceiving and giving birth, shows the man his power. In the conjugal act the man is active, the woman contemplative, whereas in parturition the situations are reversed.⁶⁶

Thus, an exchange occurs where the man reveals something to the woman regarding herself and the woman reveals something to the man regarding himself. At the moment of giving birth in the hospital, however, the woman experiences a certain aloneness and lack of privacy that contrasts sharply with the intimacy of the conjugal act.⁶⁷ In the midst of parturition, she feels spiritually and emotionally distant from her child. In this way, her suffering is not only physical, but also spiritual.⁶⁸

Abstaining from sexual intercourse as they near the time of parturition, the *spouses* allow their love to be transformed into a proven love that will bear fruit in their future relations. Indeed, their carnal love is permeated by a spiritual love that becomes incarnate in the flesh and blood of their child.⁶⁹ Adrienne outlines a type of "transfer of roles" that occurs in the spouses' abstention. At the beginning of their married life, the man introduced the woman into their sexual, conjugal life. Now the woman introduces him into renunciation. Ultimately, however, the child is the reason for the suspension of sexual intercourse. Because the child grants them this new, spiritual way of giving to each other, the spouses realize that they belong to the "sacramental power of the child."⁷⁰

Adrienne's keen insights into pregnancy and parturition underscore the importance that the spouses be as present and available to each other as possible during this crucial period of family life.⁷¹ For a young husband and wife who are expecting their first child, the

⁶⁶A. von Speyr, *Achtzehn Psalmen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1957) Ed. H.U. von Balthasar, 113-114. Hereafter cited as *Ps.* Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Theo-drama V*, 475-476. In reference to this passage of A. von Speyr, von Balthasar writes: "In genuine sexual love, the man's part which seems to be pure 'action,' is really self-surrender only if the loss of its own substance is seen as a gain and a possibility of further development in the other (the woman). [...] The man is hardly aware of the extent of his self-surrender; it becomes clear to him only through the woman's pregnancy, the birth of the child and his own responsibility for bringing up the child."

⁶⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 209-210.

⁶⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 218-219. Cf. *NB XII*, 224: "Die Frau ist nie entfernter vom Kind, als während sie es gebiert. Oft sind ihr Glaube und ihre Hoffnung ganz verschleiert."

⁶⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 191-192.

⁷⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 195-197.

⁷¹Needless to say, Adrienne's insights underscore the misguided intentions of those women who decide to have a child on their own through artificial means (i.e. American movie actress, Jodie Foster). Even while the child is in the womb (not to mention when he will be born), it is important that both parents be available to him. Certainly, there are heroic situations such as that of the pregnant unmarried woman who decides to give birth to her child rather than abort it, despite the protests of those around her (boyfriend, parents etc). Ideally, there would be others in the unmarried mother's life who could substitute for an absent father, such as the child's grandfather. Cf. *Chr*, 124-127.

time of pregnancy can demand that each make considerable adjustments in their lives. The man may have to decrease his working hours and leisure activities to better care for his wife and child-to-be-born. The woman not only undergoes bodily and emotional changes, but also she may have to adjust her life notably especially if she works outside the home. However, most of all, pregnancy is a time of much grace for the spouses epitomized in Adrienne's observation that they belong to the "sacramental power of the child." The spouses' love for each other and God's gift of fruitfulness becomes visible and concrete in the mother's growing womb. In other words, their spousal love becomes personified in God's gift of the child.

10.2.8 Parturition: The Experience of the Virgin Mary

In her meditations on Mary's experience of parturition, Adrienne holds that Jesus was born naturally and that the Virgin Mother experienced birth pangs as would any woman giving birth.⁷² Even though Adrienne's views regarding Jesus' natural birth differ somewhat with traditional teaching, in more recent years the question over Mary's virginity *in partu* remains more open than in the past. Hilda Graef, who wrote a two volume history on Marian doctrine and devotion, notes: "Mary's continued virginity after the birth of Jesus is traditionally believed to include also her virginity *in partu*, that is, in the very act of giving birth, when Jesus was thought to have passed through her closed womb without breaking the hymen."⁷³ However, she adds that a number of more recent theologians no longer hold Mary's virginity *in partu* to be a matter "of faith." For example, Graef cites Albert Mitterer who held that such a teaching would detract from Mary's true motherhood while adding nothing to her virginity. Mitterer underlined that virginity is violated only by intercourse, that Scripture does not suggest virginity *in partu* in the traditional sense and that the perforation of the hymen in giving birth would not have violated Mary's virginity, just as Jesus' circumcision did not violate his.⁷⁴ Citing *LG*, 57, which states that Jesus's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it," Stefano De Fiores observes that this formula emphasized Mary's virginity *in partu* while at the same time did not

⁷²Cf. *NB XII*, 213: "Es ist idiotisch, zu behaupten, Maria hätte keinerlei Wehen verspürt, denn dann hätte sie ihren typischen Auftrag zur Erlösung der Welt nicht geleistet."

⁷³Hilda Graef, *Mary, A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol. I, *From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 14.

⁷⁴H. Graef, *Mary, A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol. I, 14-15. Cf. Albert Mitterer, *Dogma und Biologie der heiligen Familie* (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1952) 98-132. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Decree on Mary's virginity *in partu*" in *Ephemerides mariologicae* 11 (1961), 138. In a statement dated July 27, 1960, the Holy Office (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) noted that mentioning the intimate details of Mary's anatomy in a crude and unbecoming fashion was to be avoided. This seems to be a response to Mitterer's work. It is important to bear in mind that Adrienne's insights on Mary's virginity originate from the mid 1940's. It is not clear if she was aware of the Church's traditional teaching on the topic. What is clear that even if she did differ sometimes on speculative theological matters, she never desired to oppose an established matter of faith. Cf. *Chr*, 116. Adrienne writes to a correspondent regarding the principles of counseling: "*Casti connubii* ist für uns Gesetz, und die Buchstaben stehen da, unerbittlich, so sagen Sie. Ich würde sagen: wohltuend fest, denn man kann freilich daran nicht so lange heruminterpretieren, bis jeder unserer geheimen Wünsche gerechtfertigt wird und das Gesetz jeweils gerade das bedeutet, was unserer Patienten gerne hören."

attempt to explain it theologically.⁷⁵

In any case, Adrienne sustains that not only did Mary suffer bodily, but also and most importantly, she suffered spiritually in at least three ways. First, the Virgin Mother suffered spiritually because she was so *pure and untouched*. Although giving birth to a child is a natural life event, it can be quite traumatic for a new mother. As noted in the previous subsection, the mother feels torn in two by a pain that is physical but also somehow spiritual. Adrienne observes that Mary, who had never known man, felt herself being torn apart in the most intimate part of her body.⁷⁶ Second, Mary's spiritual suffering *in partu* is characterized by Adrienne as a *feeling of abandonment by the Father*. She explains that the Mother of God suffers in advance the abandonment that the Lord will experience on the Cross when he is forsaken by all, even by his Father in heaven.⁷⁷ Third, Mary's suffering at parturition is *intertwined with her Son's suffering on the Cross*. Adrienne explains: "The Woman [Mary], who is gifted with a spiritual life, experiences in the physical childbearing, the spiritual suffering of the Man [Christ], who includes the bodily in the great difficulty of spiritual suffering: on the Cross, the bodily suffering is so unbearably difficult only in view of the spiritual suffering."⁷⁸ Therefore, just as the Son's physical suffering on the way to the Cross is a foretaste of the spiritual suffering of abandonment that he will undergo, so too Mary's suffering at parturition is a foretaste of her own spiritual suffering of future separation from her Son. Both Mother and Son are united in their suffering.

⁷⁵Cf. Stefano De Fiores, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea* (Roma: Centro di Cultura Mariana "Madre della Chiesa," 1991), 441. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Co-workers of the Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) 388-389. Ratzinger writes that the virginity *in partu* problem is rooted in the difference between our world view and the biblical account. He explains: "Regarding the tenets of our world view that would psychologically compel us to declare the Virgin Birth an impossibility, it is clear that this is not a result based on knowledge but on evaluation. Granted, a virgin birth, now as then, is improbable but not at all simply impossible; there is no proof of its impossibility, and no serious scientist would assert there is." Ultimately, it becomes a question about God: "Is God, somewhere, a deep dimension of all being, holding up everything like bouyant water, as it were, with no one knowing how; or is he the one who acts, who has power, who knows and loves his creation, is present to it and active in it, forevermore, even here and now?" It seems clear to the writer of this thesis that affirming that Mary gave birth naturally to Jesus does not take away from her virginity. These days we know more about reproductive anatomy than in the past. It has been shown that a young woman's hymen can be broken outside of sexual intercourse. Therefore, the mere perforation of the hymen does not diminish a woman's virginal nature. That Mary would have given birth naturally to Jesus opens the door to much profound theological insight as in the case of Adrienne von Speyr's contributions on the topic.

⁷⁶Cf. *NB XII*, 218: "Der Schmerz der Mutter, wenn das Kind die äußern Genitalien aufreißt, läßt sich für sie nicht eigentlich lokalisieren." Here, A. is not referring in particular to the Virgin Mary, but to any woman who gives birth. However, further down on the same page she affirms: "Auch Maria hat einen solchen Schmerz gekannt, da ihr Kind sich von ihr trennte; einen Schmerz, der eigentlich seine Mitte an dem Punkt hatte, wo die Empfängnis stattfindet."

⁷⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 213: "In ihren Wehen ist sie auf ihre Weise vom Vater verlassen." Adrienne does not offer details how Mary comes to experience abandonment by the Father, but perhaps it is linked to the separation she might have felt from the Child. In feeling separated from Jesus during parturition, she would feel separated from the Father. Therefore, in a vicarious way, she experiences in a small and brief way the abandonment that the Lord will experience on the Cross. A. notes that a mother never feels more distant from her child than during child birth. Cf. *NB XII*, 224.

⁷⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 217.

With the birth of the Son, a new stage in Mary's fruitfulness unfolds. In Mary's breast feeding of the new-born Child, she responds with her whole being in an act that is at once bodily and spiritual.⁷⁹ She enacts in a truly concrete and tangible way the *fiat* that she pronounced at the Annunciation. When assenting to receive God into her womb, she gave her own body as a dwelling place. Now Jesus lives outside her womb, but she continues to give her substance to him. And in Mary's giving of herself to the Lord, she foreshadows the giving of the Lord to the Church on the Cross. Therefore, the future blood of the Cross is embodied in Mary's milk.⁸⁰ With this meditation, Adrienne paints a picture where Mary's milk nourishes the Child's body and blood. In turn, the Son will one day shed this same blood for all of mankind.

Adrienne's meditations on Mary's parturition and breast feeding of Jesus serve as a framework for Christian spouses to understand how they too participate in the mysteries that encompass and transcend them. In his Incarnation and Redemption, Jesus Christ did not sanctify marriage merely externally, but truly from within in every conceivable way.⁸¹ The woman, who gives birth to her child and later suckles him, is drawn into Mary's experience of parturition and nursing. In her physical, spiritual and emotional experiences, the mother can draw strength from the Mother's own experiences. And in so doing the Christian wife draws her husband into the same mystery. In this way, the birth of the spouses' child is both a physically and spiritually fruitful event for their marriage.

10.2.9 Priests, Marriage Counselors, Seminarians and the Sexual Realm

Certainly, many of Adrienne's insights regarding spirituality and sexuality demand much discretion on the part of the priest and of any person who counsels married people. A number of the insights presented in this section (10.2) must be treated with delicacy and discretion. In this spirit, Adrienne underscores that the marriage counselor must always treat his or her advisees with discretion and professional objectivity. Not guided by curiosity, but by love and sincerity, the counselor leads the advisee to the heart of a particular difficulty⁸² while viewing it from different angles.⁸³ In dealing with married couples, the marriage counselor should emphasize the indissolubility of marriage and the importance of marital fidelity that together serve as a foundation for the physical and spiritual fruitfulness of marriage.⁸⁴

Priests and others who counsel engaged and married persons must be especially conscientious to present Catholic teachings in a way that is not abstract. Relying on the Church's teachings for guidance, they draw from her wisdom in order to address those

⁷⁹Cf. *NB XII*, 242.

⁸⁰Cf. *NB XII*, 231-232.

⁸¹Cf. *NB XII*, 213. Of course, Jesus did not have birth pangs like a mother in parturition would, but his suffering on the Cross dwarfs her suffering, encompasses it and ultimately gives meaning to it: "Und wenn der Sohn am Kreuz die Erlösung der Welt gebiert, dann fühlt er in der Gottverlassenheit etwas vom Verlassenheit des Weibes bei der Geburt."

⁸²Cf. *Chr*, 93-96.

⁸³Cf. *Chr*, 7.

⁸⁴Cf. *Chr*, 18.

difficult situations that arise from time to time in marriage.⁸⁵ Offering herself in the spirit of love and truth to her members, the Church provides the priest/counselor with centuries of wise consideration of Scripture and Tradition. By not interpreting Church doctrine anyway he pleases, the priest/counselor allows his freedom to be expanded rather than restricted. He is brought beyond his own personal realm to the realm of Christ and his love for his Church.⁸⁶

Furthermore, it is important that priests treat those areas of the lived faith that may appear merely existential, such as the sexual realm, in a way that takes in all aspects: spiritual, practical, psychological etc.⁸⁷ To this end, Adrienne urges priests to witness the birth of a child at least once. When the priest has the proper attitude in dealing with the sexual sphere, he can be particularly effective in the confessional.⁸⁸ Thus, the priest is neither prudish nor indiscrete:

In their relationships with women, they [priests] take as their model the nobility and naturalness of Jesus. While maintaining total simplicity in their attitude to sexuality, they look on the consecration of their sexual powers to God as an extremely serious matter, affecting their priestly vocation at the most profound level. Prepared for a possible lifelong struggle, they regard the unsatisfied longing for completion and loneliness in an often unsuccessful priestly ministry as a grace of participation in the Cross of the Lord.⁸⁹

Although the preceding passage was written mainly with the priests of the *Johannesgemeinschaft* in mind, it is clear that the attitude espoused could be recommended for *all* priests.

For priest-spiritual directors and confessors, seminarians and seminary staff, Adrienne has some pertinent advice. Regarding spiritual directors and confessors, she warns

⁸⁵Some of the most important documents on marriage and sexuality that have emerged during the last century are as follows: Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (1930); Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968); John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984), *Letter to Families* (1994); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Matrimonii Sacramentum* (1966), *Persona Humana* (1975), *Donum Vitae* (1987); Pontifical Council of the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Guidelines for Education within the Family* (1995), *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* (1996), *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life* (1997); Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives on the Formation of Seminarians Concerning Problems Related to Marriage and the Family* (1995).

⁸⁶Cf. *Chr.*, 118: "Die Normierung unseres Handelns durch die Kirche bedeutet kein Eingreifen in unsere Berufsfreiheit; sie ist vielmehr eine Erweiterung dieser Freiheit, weil unsere Kunst einordnet in die Gebote der Liebe des Christentums und ihr damit den Raum für eine allgemeingültige Entfaltung anbietet." With this observation, it becomes clear that priests who do not present the Church's teachings truthfully are ultimately guilty of an egoism and pride that estimates that their opinion is of more importance than the Church's. Needless to say, it is a great disservice to the faithful when priests fail to teach the truths of Catholicism. Authentic loving pastoral care always includes teaching the truths and beauty of the faith.

⁸⁷Cf. *NB XII*, 232.

⁸⁸Cf. *NB XII*, 10: "Den Dingen ins Auge sehen; keine Flucht vor dem Sexuellen. Hat der Beichtvater das rechte, offene Verhältnis zum Körperlichen, so kann er auch im Beichtstuhl viel besser helfen. Im Grunde müßte jeder Priester einmal bei einer Geburt dabeigewesen sein; das wäre menschlich ohne weiteres tragbar."

⁸⁹H.U. von Balthasar, *Unser Auftrag*, 138. [161]. This passage is taken from the plan for the Community of St. John in the section describing the spirit of the priests' branch.

that sometimes a woman who feels unhappy or misunderstood may come to speak to a priest mainly to attract attention to herself. The priest must be careful to establish boundaries, as Adrienne elaborates:

[These women] want to “ask something,” and when the priest lets his guard down, everything can get off on the wrong track. It can begin very harmlessly, but soon leads to a false confession, because the boundaries between objective avowal of sin and the presentation of oneself are not observed. Sins are arranged and presented pleasantly as in a gift basket. And the priest does not want to help through words of encouragement and absolution within the framework of the sacraments, but begins to take part in the fate of the sinner, of the suffering woman. Here, one must be careful; the priest can forget that he must basically forget the confession.⁹⁰

If the priest feels unsure of himself, he should consider passing the spiritual counseling onto another. Adrienne warns that numerous cases of fallen priests were due to seductions by women.⁹¹

Seminaries, which prepare young men for the priesthood, bear an important responsibility. Adrienne suggests that candidates to the priesthood should be formed to see with Christian eyes the beauties of the sexual sphere, but also the dangers of sin. She encourages that seminarians be given an interior formation, rather than simply some kind of external shield. They must learn to deal with the sexual sphere with objectivity and a matter-of-factness [*Nüchternheit*]. After an initial period of pastoral practice, Adrienne recommends that new priests be required to have some additional follow-up reflection and instruction since situations that new priests are confronted with in pastoral ministry often present themselves differently than in the seminary pastoral formation classes. Above all, priest candidates should learn to appreciate the gift of belonging body and soul to the Lord. Well-formed priests deal with situations from the sexual sphere that are presented to them in a pure, pastoral, mature and loving way.⁹²

⁹⁰NB XII, 12.

⁹¹NB XII, 12-13. To be sure, women do not only seduce priests, but also priests seduce women and even children. All three cases inflict severely deep wounds and are disastrous for pastoral ministry. However, when the priest is the initiator, the offense appears especially heinous and creates immeasurable destruction in the life of the Church. Cf. John Paul II, *Letter to Priests, Holy Thursday 2000*, no. 6: “Many times, the human frailty of priests made it hard to see in them the face of Christ. Here in the Upper Room why should this amaze us? Not only did the betrayal of Judas reach its climax here, but Peter himself had to reckon with his weakness as he heard the bitter prediction of his denial. In choosing men like the Twelve, Christ was certainly under no illusions: it was upon this human weakness that he set the sacramental seal of his presence. [...] For all the frailties of their priests, then, the People of God have not ceased to put their faith in the power of Christ at work through their ministry.”

⁹²Cf. NB XII, 13: “Nicht künstliche Panzer sollen sie sich zulegen, sondern christliche Sachlichkeit und Nüchternheit. In der sexuellen Aufklärung der Priesterkandidaten sollte man möglichst weit gehen; sie sollen wissen und zugleich mit christlichen Augen der Schönheiten wie die Gefahren, die tragischen Situationen und Verhängnisse der ganzen Sphäre betrachten lernen. Sie sollten die Nüchternheit und selbstlose Hirtenliebe des Seelsorgers gewinnen und vor allem stets im Blick behalten, welch unerhörtes Geschenk des Herrn es ist, ihm mit Leib und Seele gehören zu dürfen.” Even though in more recent years seminary formators have seen the importance of providing a stronger formation program that addresses the sexual sphere, Adrienne’s words from the 1940’s continue to be pertinent and insightful.

10.2.10 Excursus: The Trinity and the Family

As noted above (subsection 10.2.4) and elsewhere (subsection 8.3.2), Adrienne hints at the analogy between the Trinity and the family. However, is the analogy prevalent in her theology of marriage? And if so, several other questions emerge. In the first place, is it *theologically acceptable* to draw comparisons between the Trinity and the family when the divine Persons infinitely surpass the familial persons in perfection? Second, if it is acceptable to draw such comparisons or analogies, what would be the *theological parameters*? Third, what are the *advantages and disadvantages* of making connections between the Trinity and the family? Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address these questions in detail, it is nevertheless important that they be touched upon since Adrienne does occasionally draw analogies between the Persons of the Trinity and the familial persons.⁹³ After briefly examining the history of the Trinity-family question, the three questions posed above will be addressed.

Over the centuries, a trinitarian theology of the family has been slow to develop. Because Augustine (354-430) could not perceive how the persons of the human family could imitate the perfect unity of the trinitarian Persons, he was hesitant to develop a family analogy with the Trinity.⁹⁴ However, Richard of St. Victor (who died in 1173) made important contributions to the question when he showed that the child was the communion of the spouses incarnated in a third person. The key to Richard's trinitarian theology is *charity*. He was able to show that charity in God necessarily points to a trinitarian God. When charity is perfect as it is in God, it cannot be limited to a dialogue between two persons; it needs to communicate its joy to a third.⁹⁵ Even though Richard of St. Victor was a theologian of the twelfth century, his conception of the intersubjectivity of the trinitarian Persons appeared to be ahead of its time. From his theology, it is easy to perceive how one

⁹³Cf. *NB XII*, 140-141: "In seiner vollkommensten Gestalt ist der Akt trinitarisch zu verstehen: der Mann kennzeichnet den Vater, die Frau den Sohn und das Kind den Geist." Cf. *Jo I*, 248. [192]. Here Adrienne refers to the analogy more indirectly as she describes how a child can enliven the love between man and woman in a way similar to how the Spirit is the lively witness to all love. Thus, the child is analogous to the Spirit. Cf. *NB XII*, 32.72. Cf. *Jo I*, 310. [237].

⁹⁴Cf. Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History, Studies in Historical Theology* (Petersham, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982) transl. Edmund J. Fortman, 290, n. 40. De Margerie claims that not only did Augustine *explicitly* reject the analogy typically represented in the tradition at the time (where Adam would resemble the Father, Seth the Son and Eve the Holy Spirit), but also in his *De Trinitate*, Augustine *implicitly* rejected other models as well. De Margerie writes: "The context clearly shows that St. Augustine rejects every form of family analogy (in the sense of image and not only of vestige) of the Trinitarian mystery in terms of his interpretation of Gn. 1:26-27 and in the context of his Trinitarian and anthropological doctrine: man can only be the image of the whole Trinity, so much so that he cannot at the same time in his interpersonal relations be a functional image of one Person in particular." De Margerie indicates, however, that Augustine contradicts *Eph 3*, 15 ("from the Father, from whom all paternity in heaven and on earth draws its name"). Cf. Augustine, *The Trinity. The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963) transl. Stephen McKenna, CSSR, 347-348: "We do not reject this opinion, therefore, because [...] but because the divine Scripture clearly shows it to be false." (*De Trinitate*, XII, VI, 6; *PL* 42, 1001).

⁹⁵Cf. Riccardo di S. Vittore, *La Trinità* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1990) Translation, introduction, notes and indices by Mario Spinelli, 126-149.

can understand better the human family by contemplating the Trinity.⁹⁶ Pierre Adnès notes that St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) alluded to the family analogy, but discarded it when it dealt with the Trinity. Adnès writes that because Aquinas judged the family to have an origin that was too material, he could not compare it to the divine Persons whose procession is purely spiritual.⁹⁷ Although he adopted the father-child-woman scheme that was rejected by Augustine, Matthias Scheeben (19th century) remains an important theologian for the Trinity-family question because he drew attention to the topic that had not been discussed much in the preceding centuries.

More recently, Vatican Council II took up the Trinity-family question when in *Gaudium et Spes*, 24 it was noted that there exists “a certain similarity between the union of divine persons and the union of God’s children in truth and love.” Moreover, although John Paul II has been cautious in his statements on the theological meaning of the family analogy of the Trinity, nonetheless he has given the question a somewhat official status in the Magisterium.⁹⁸ Furthermore, John Paul’s contributions regarding the Trinity as a *communio personarum* open a door to understanding the human family from the standpoint of a “community of persons” united in a love that is authentically personalized.

Although the official Magisterium has not offered a detailed contribution to the Trinity-family question in the wake of Vatican Council II, two notable theologians, Klaus Hemmerle and Piero Coda have sought to investigate this question. Klaus Hemmerle has shown that every human act is simultaneously an act of *freedom*, *surrender* and *communication*. Hemmerle articulates that the more radical one’s act of freedom, surrender and communication, the more dynamically one inserts oneself in the world. Man engages himself to the world most intensely through his bodily and verbal expression. By considering marriage and family in the light of these phenomenological principles, Hemmerle establishes three planes of matrimonial sexuality. On a first plane, conjugal love is “fulfillment-surrender-openness.” On a second plane, human sexuality has both “present” and “future” elements. In this way, conjugal love is both “prophetic” and “creative.” In other words, spouses say to each other: “I choose you to be my future.” On a third plane, the

⁹⁶Cf. Pierre Adnès, “Matrimonio e Mistero Trinitario” in *Amore e Stabilità nel Matrimonio* (Roma: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1976) 16.

⁹⁷Cf. P. Adnès, “Matrimonio e Mistero Trinitario,” 16-17. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *First Complete American Edition in Three Volumes, Volume One* (containing the First Part QQ. 1-119 and First Part of the Second Part, QQ. 1-114) (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947) Transl. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 186: “So also did Abel proceed immediately from Adam, inasmuch as Adam was his father; and mediately, as Eve was his mother, who proceeded from Adam; although, indeed, this example of a material possession is inept to signify the immaterial procession of the divine persons.” (*STh*, Ia, q. 36, ad 1^{um})

⁹⁸Cf. *MD*, 6-8. Cf. *FC*, 11: “God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.” Cf. *LF*, 6: “The divine ‘We’ is the eternal pattern of the human ‘we,’ especially of that ‘we’ formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.” Cf. *LF*, 8: “In the words of the Council, the ‘communion’ of persons is drawn in a certain sense from the mystery of the Trinitarian ‘We,’ and therefore ‘conjugal communion’ also refers to this mystery.”

bodiliness of sexuality is a mode of relating to the world.⁹⁹

Hemmerle goes on to show that each of these planes is an image of the exchanges between the trinitarian Persons. However, he notes:

There is an insuperable difference: the unity of existence and being, and therefore the tri-personality of the interior Being to itself and the absolute unity of the Being in the self-communication of the Persons are irreconcilable with the fundamental constitution of the created being: it is a unique characteristic of the absolute Divine Being. Nevertheless, both the 'being-in-onself' and the 'being-with' of the created person have their 'precept' in the Being of God: the structures which are evident and deduced from the phenomenon of the human act and of the fundamental act of sexuality have their ultimate roots in the divine trinitarian Being and are comprised and illuminated by this.¹⁰⁰

In his explanation, Hemmerle offers a strong phenomenological basis for establishing the essential correlations between the Trinity and the family. However, he also notes the fundamental differences of the principle parts of the Trinity-family analogy.

Like Klaus Hemmerle, Piero Coda also delves into the Trinity-family analogy question. Coda notes that it is important to establish the theological foundations of the family in order that the family structure is seen as one that was definitively given and not perceived simply as one communal structure among other "cultural" structures. Coda states that he intends to supplement and complete the theological observations of Hemmerle. Coda does this in four steps. First, Coda shows how the Trinity and the family encounter one another again and again in various ways and circumstances throughout the history of salvation. Second, Coda proposes a "trinitarian ecclesiology" of the family. Citing Matthew 10, 37-38,¹⁰¹ Coda affirms that Jesus forms a church (founded on Christ) from the family. Coda notes: "To live the relations between husband and wife and parents and children 'in Christ,' means to acknowledge in the other the same Christ, treating him according to the form of trinitarian relation that is revealed to us in the paschal event; as it is described in the Letter to the Ephesians. (respectively 5,21-33; 6,1-4)" It is noteworthy that Jesus not only forms a church from the family, but also he forms a family from the church.¹⁰² From this, Coda states that the fundamental relation in the church is based on trinitarian love that entails equality, distinction and reciprocity simultaneously. The Holy Family is the enfleshment of this family-church relation.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Klaus Hemmerle, "Matrimonio e famiglia in una antropologia trinitaria" in *Nuova umanità, rivista bimestrale di cultura*, gennaio-febbraio 1984, città nuova editrice 31, anno vi, n. 31, directed by Giuseppe Maria Zanghi, 3-29.

¹⁰⁰Klaus Hemmerle, "Matrimonio e famiglia in una antropologia trinitaria," 29.

¹⁰¹"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Mt 10, 37-38)

¹⁰²Cf. Mk 10, 29-30.

¹⁰³Piero Coda, "Familia y Trinidad. Reflexión Teológica" in *Estudios trinitarios*, Enero-Abril 1995, *publicacio del Secretariado Trinitario*, Salamanca, Vol XXIX, No. 1, 187-211.

In a third step, Piero Coda underscores that this family-church understanding has important consequences for religious life and the priesthood. It raises the possibility of new forms of religious life. Moreover, priests must continue to learn from the family and live as family with other priests, avoiding clericalism at all cost. In a fourth and final step, Coda emphasizes that a renewal of modern society can come about precisely only through the family. Coda notes that his theme surfaces repeatedly in papal and conciliar documents on the family.¹⁰⁴ It is clear that both Klaus Hemmerle and Piero Coda offer valuable contributions to the present day discussion of the Trinity-family analogy.

At this point it is germane to take up the first question posed above: Is it theologically acceptable to draw comparisons between the Trinity and the family when the divine Persons infinitely surpass the familial persons in perfection? Von Balthasar begins to answer this question when he notes that when considering such analogies it must be borne in mind that the differences between God and us far outweigh the similarities:

Being in the 'image and likeness' of God does not mean that the creature must imitate God as his model so exactly that a beholder might easily confuse the image with the archetype. It means accenting the distance between the creature and Creator so that, from the perspective of this distance, the unmistakable and unique character of the archetype will become ever more evident. The likeness of the creature to God presumes that the creature will differentiate himself all the more humbly from God in order thus to open himself more widely to the reception of God's divine rays.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, on the one hand, one notes the similarities in the analogy; on the other hand, one is humbled before the distance that separates one from God. Nonetheless, God would not have made man in his "image and likeness" without also giving him the divine strength to imitate him. Von Balthasar explains: "Man could not be absolutely this 'image and likeness' of God, if God had reflected in him only his own 'essence' with the exclusion of the trinitarian vitality of this essence."¹⁰⁶ Thus, it is theologically acceptable to consider Trinity-family analogies as long as the limits of the analogies are borne in mind and oversimplification is avoided. Furthermore, it seems that not only did God make man and woman in his image and likeness, but also he gave them the means to live in his image and likeness.

Second, the question was raised: What would be the theological parameters of a Trinity-family analogy? Certainly, this is a complex question that can only be given summary treatment here. Nonetheless, several additional questions come to mind. Can analogies only be drawn from the Trinity to understand the family? Or is it also possible to contemplate the human family to better understand the Trinity? Is there merely an

¹⁰⁴Piero Coda, "Familia y Trinidad," 211-219.

¹⁰⁵H.U. von Balthasar, *Christlicher Stand*, 52. [68].

¹⁰⁶H.U. von Balthasar, *Verità di Dio. Volume II di Teologica* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1990) transl. Guido Sommovilla, 25. Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 43: "La *communio* come dimensione essenziale dell'umano è parte del suo essere a immagine di Dio. La rivelazione cristiana ci attesta che Dio stesso è un mistero di comunione e di vicendevole dedizione delle ipostasi divine. L'Altro è in Dio. Solo il mistero ineffabile della Trinità spiega e valorizza al massimo la creaturalità e le differenze che in essa sperimentiamo."

analogous relationship that exists between the Trinity and the family or is it also a more *existential* one? In short, what would be the theological guidelines for approaching the Trinity-family analogy?

Above all, one must gaze on Jesus Christ to begin to comprehend the vast mysteries of the Trinity-family question. By living in a human family himself, Christ brought the trinitarian Persons into communion with humanity. Certainly, this communion existed from the beginning, but Christ revealed it to man. Beginning with the Son of God's incarnation in the human family, other theological parameters arise under which the Trinity-family question should be explored. The consideration of the family as a *domestic Church* and *covenantal theology* both point in the direction of a deepening of the Trinity-family analogy.

Adrienne von Speyr describes the family not only by drawing analogies from the relations of the Trinitarian persons, but also she explains the Trinity drawing analogies from the relations of the persons of the human family. The former methodology seems justifiable; the latter may appear questionable to some scholars. As long as one bears in mind the limits of the analogy, it seems acceptable to "go both directions." On the one hand, examining the family in the light of the Trinity emphasizes man's receptivity towards God. On the other hand, Christ's own experience within the human family, makes it theologically legitimate to pass from the family to the Trinity in order to better understand the relations of the divine Persons.

In Adrienne's writings, she sometimes asserts that the relationship between the Trinity and the family is not merely *analogous*, but also, *existential*. Family members do not only reflect the mutual loving, receiving and giving of the trinitarian Persons, but also they participate in the exchange of love between the divine Persons. Describing how "married love is caught up into divine love," *Gaudium et Spes* 48 certainly points in this direction. Man, woman and child truly participate in trinitarian love inasmuch as they form a domestic Church and are taken up and nourished by the Church's sacraments. The family, therefore, is not merely an *image* of the Church in its communion, mission and common worship, but more importantly an *ecclesial reality*.¹⁰⁷

Finally, it was asked: What are the advantages and disadvantages of making connections between the Trinity and the family? The disadvantages have been somewhat addressed above. Certainly, the Trinity-family analogy can be treated in an oversimplified manner. To avoid oversimplification, the complexities of the question must always be borne in mind. Nevertheless, there are a number of advantages to further developing the Trinity-family analogy. Above all, if family members were to perceive how they are truly an "image and likeness" of the divine Persons, they could better imitate and incarnate the mutual exchange that occurs between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit thereby opening themselves to God's spiritual and bodily fruitfulness so that they may be drawn into his trinitarian life.

¹⁰⁷John Paul II uses the term "domestic church" in *Familiaris Consortio* in three different ways. First, the family as a domestic church is an *ecclesial communion* (FC 21, 38, 48, 49). Second, the family as a domestic church has its unique *mission* of evangelization (FC, 51-54). Third, the family as a domestic church abides insofar as it is a sanctuary of *worship* and prayer (FC, 55, 59, 61). Noting that communion, mission and worship originate in the triune God, it is possible here to make the bridge between the family as domestic church and God as triune communion.

10.3 The Duties of the State of Marriage

God, through Jesus Christ, established an order in marriage that goes beyond any kind of sociological, cultural or political dimension. The order of marriage is ultimately theological in nature and founded on the relations between the divine Persons, where hierarchical ordering is compatible with equality of being, as was shown in section 9.4.2. In this section, it will be examined how this Christian order in marriage is lived out in the day to day life of the husband, wife and children.

In order to capture the authentic spirit of living their marriage roles, the spouses look to the Lord and to Mary as models. Adrienne observes that at the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus and Mary embody the roles of man and woman. As Jesus' helper, counselor and friend, Mary embodies the woman who "is attentive, cares, inspires and points out." No longer a young child, Jesus embodies the adult man who "acts according to his own judgement and in independence." Like Mary, the Christian wife stands in the background and in her inspiration she nurtures her husband's spiritual life. She indicates things to him that he might have missed. But if her husband truly thinks like Christ, she allows him to make the decision.¹⁰⁸ Above all, the roles of the spouses are complementary. In living his manly and fatherly roles, the husband calls forth his wife's womanly and motherly roles and vice versa. In their reciprocity, each spouses exalts in the other's differences.¹⁰⁹

10.3.1 The Headship of the Man

In his role as head of the marriage and the family, the man must lead according to the mind of Christ. In modeling himself after Christ, he can never use his role to take advantage of the woman. Thus, just as the Lord uses the Church's subjection to him to form her, so too the man forms the woman with her help and in so doing, he reveals the Lord to her.¹¹⁰ In imitating the Lord, then, the man is to be astute, well-balanced, calm and wise in

¹⁰⁸Cf. *Jo I*, 215. [167-168]: "Darum stehen sie der Herr und seine Mutter in diesem Augenblick auch als Mann und Frau gegenüber. Bisher war Maria die Mutter, die Ältere und die Gebende. Später wird der Herr sie immer mehr überwachsen, und sie wird gleichsam seine jüngere Braut sein. Hier zu Beginn des öffentlichen Lebens, stehen sie sich in einer Art geistiger Gleichaltrigkeit gegenüber: er ist der erwachsene Mann, der selbständig gewordene Sohn, und sie steht ihm als Gehilfin, Beraterin, Freundin zur Seite. Weil sie also hier Mann und Frau verkörpern, darum ist ihr Gehaben so verschieden, so ausgesprochen männlich und weiblich. Die Frau ist die Wachende und Sorgende, die Anregende und Hinweisende; der Mann ist der Handelnde aus eigenem Gutdünken und in Selbständigkeit." Cf. *MH*, 114. [104]: "Darum steht Maria hier, wenn sie mitwirkt, nicht nur als Magd, sondern als Braut Christi neben dem Herrn der Kirche." Adrienne writes that at Cana, Mary is *woman* (she points out what is lacking), she is *Mother* (she watches over the Church) and she is *Bride* (she petitions the Bridegroom as Bride on behalf of the Church).

¹⁰⁹This complementarity is played out in the Jesus-Mary relationship, but also in the man-woman relationship as was seen it in the treatment of *Das Hohelied* in section 2.3.1, where the attributes of the bridegroom call forth those of the bride and vice versa. Cf. A. Scola, "Spiritualità coniugale," 35. Rather than *complementarity*, Scola prefers to speak of *reciprocity* between the spouses: "Più che di complementarità ci sembra risulti più appropriato parlare di 'reciprocità,' in cui la relazione non estingue ma inverte e perciò esalta la differenza, facendola apparire in tutta la sua bontà."

¹¹⁰Cf. *Ep*, 187. [226-227]: "Die Rolle des Hauptes Christus ist es, zu führen und zu verfügen. Und wenn der Mann vom Herrn die Aufgabe zugeteilt wird, in seiner Nachahmung Haupt zu sein, dann wird der Mann sich darin streng an das Vorbild Christi zu halten haben. [...] Und wenn der Mann sich an den Herrn anlehnt und von ihm seine Weisungen erhält, kann er die Untertänigkeit der Frau nicht beliebig zu seinen menschlichen Zwecken benützen und mißbrauchen; er muß sie mit ihrer Hilfe so formen, wie der Herr die

his relations with the woman. Also, the more he recognizes his sinfulness and need for Redemption, the more he will realize the importance of imitating the Lord's holiness and humility.¹¹¹ When the man falls into sin, thus losing sight of the fact that he is the image of God, he can no longer lead the woman.¹¹² Above all, the man ought to see the woman as a creation of the Father, just as the Son showed honor and respect for all human life as the Father's creation. Knowing that his wife belongs to the Father and that she participates in his glorification through the Son, the husband must honor her as a gift generously and freely given by God.¹¹³

The man leads the woman in courtship and in sanctification. As the initiator, the man takes the lead in humbling himself thereby taking the risk that the woman may reject him. In this lies his humiliation. However, Adrienne notes that the woman's humiliation lies in her subsequent subjection to the man.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the man is burdened with nurturing the woman's holiness. As the Lord bears the responsibility of sanctifying the Church, so too the man is burdened with the responsibility of nurturing the woman's sanctification. Just as the Lord sanctifies the Church for the Father's glory and not his own, so too the man sanctifies the woman for the Son's glory, and not for his own.¹¹⁵

Several of Adrienne's insights on the man's headship of the woman and leadership in the family may appear rather startling to the modern man or woman. That the man must lead according to the mind of Christ and that he depends on the woman's cooperation is no surprise. However, Adrienne's observation that the husband must be the leader in sanctification may seem unusual. When it comes to the spiritual life, often the woman appears more naturally inclined than the man to take interest in deepening a relationship with Christ. Certainly there exists a mutual sanctification between spouses, but Adrienne underlines how important it is that the husband take an active interest in furthering his spiritual life so that he may be the leader of his family. Because the sinful husband and father can no longer authentically represent Christ and therefore can no longer truly lead the

Untertänigkeit seiner Kirche zu ihrer Formung benützt. [...] Der Mann offenbart ihr den Herrn." Cf. *Eph* 5, 23.

¹¹¹Cf. *Ka I*, 344. Cf. *1 Pt* 3, 7.

¹¹²Cf. *IK*, 318: "Wenn der Mann in der Sünde seinen Bildcharacter zu Gott vergißt, kann er sich seiner rechten Stellung zur Frau nicht mehr bewußt sein. Seine Bildhaftigkeit ist verschüttet; sie ist verhüllt, dort wo sie nackt sein sollte, und so hat die Frau keine Führung mehr an ihm und kann sein *Abglanz* nicht mehr sein. Sie strebt dann ihrerseits aus der hierarchischen Ordnung heraus." Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 7.

¹¹³Cf. *Ka I*, 344-345.

¹¹⁴Cf. *Ep*, 196-197. [239]: "Der Mann muß sich binden, noch bevor das Weib sich bindet. Er erspart damit dem Weibe die Demütigung, sich spontan von sich aus zu unterwerfen. Er hat das Wagnis als Erster zu bestehen, da er ja noch nicht weiß, ob das Weib seine Werbung annehmen wird. Das ist seine Demütigung, während die Demut der Frau in der nachfolgenden Unterwerfung bestehen wird." Cf. *Eph*, 5, 31. Certainly, Adrienne's statement here regarding the humbling of the man and woman must be taken within context. In other places, as has been shown, she emphasizes the mutual giving over of the spouses as a act of pure giving, receiving and vulnerable abandonment to the other. Within the context of *Eph* 5, 31, she focuses on the mutual subjection or humbling of the spouses.

¹¹⁵Cf. *Ep*, 190-191. [231-232]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 25.

family, the man must always strive to live in Christ-like holiness.¹¹⁶

Most of all, the husband and father must realize that his leadership is to be always carried out in a spirit of service. He has a God-given authority that must never be confused with power. On the one hand, *authority* is directed towards the service and the good of the family; on the other hand, *power* can be abused and characterized by selfishness. Furthermore, even though the woman subjects herself to the man, Adrienne stresses that the man is actually the first to subject himself in a *temporal* sense when it comes to courtship or the conjugal act. However, he also subjects himself first in an *anthropological* sense because he must subject himself to Christ and the Cross; the woman follows subjecting herself to her husband.

It is most noteworthy that the woman's subjection to the man does not in any way diminish her freedom. In *Casti Connubii*, an encyclical that Adrienne refers to in *Christiane* thus manifesting her familiarity with the papal document, Pope Pius XI addresses the theme of the woman's liberty:

This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors. [...] But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as she occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.¹¹⁷

Therefore, should the man make a request of the woman that is devoid of right reason, the woman is justified in not obeying it.

Furthermore, although the principle of the man's headship remains intact, circumstances may vary. Therefore, a husband living during this decade would most probably fulfill his leadership role in a different manner than a husband would have done fifty years ago. Pius XI notes: "Again, this subjection of the wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duties, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family."¹¹⁸ Adrienne's uncompromising words on the headship of the man in marriage may strike modern ears rather harshly. However, it is clear that although she departs from the

¹¹⁶The husband must model himself after Joseph as noted in the previous subsection 10.2.6. Pius XII focuses on Joseph's holy leadership in the following citation. Cf. Pope Pius XII, "Authority of Husband over Wife" (*Quando alium*) in *Dear Newlyweds*, 164: "Before him he saw the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was better, holier, more sublime than he. A sovereign respect caused him to venerate her as Queen of Angels and Men, the Mother of his God; and yet he remained and acted in his post as head of the Holy Family, nor was he ever found wanting in any of the supreme obligations which this role imposed upon him."

¹¹⁷CC, 27.

¹¹⁸CC, 28.

theological principle of Christ's headship of the Church in *Ephesians* 5, 21-33, she, along with Pius XI, would acknowledge that the exact manner that headship and subjection are carried out may vary from age to age. In her own life, Adrienne von Speyr witnessed to this principle. In one sense, in her pursuit of a medical profession, Adrienne was a "modern woman." In the 1930's, 40's and 50's when she practiced medicine, few women did the same. Furthermore, after the death of her first husband, she had to care for his two children, thus taking over her late husband's headship role. At least in the United States, the husband and father of today is more likely than in the past to take an active part in the raising of the children and in assisting his wife with domestic responsibilities. This positive development does not diminish the husband's leadership role. On the contrary, it enhances it. A mature husband and father is not merely a "breadwinner" for the family, but he takes an active role in assisting his wife in the raising of the children.

10.3.2 The Subjection of the Woman

The *woman* understands that her subjection to the man falls under the general precept that all Christians subject themselves to Christ. Therefore, in subjecting herself to the Lord in obedience, she also subjects herself to her husband. However, in obedience, both subjections are united. Adrienne writes: "Obedience characterizes the whole existential attitude of the woman. If she has a husband, she has to practice it toward her husband as if to the Lord. If she has no husband, she practices it toward the Lord."¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, the woman does not see the man as her *absolute* head. In Christian marriage, the man is her principal head only because Christ is his head. Precisely because the man must try to represent Christ to the woman and can never perfectly imitate him, the man is humbled while she is raised up. Paradoxically, the husband must humble himself before Christ in order to truly bear his elevated position of headship.¹²⁰

Therefore, Adrienne affirms that the husband is head of the woman only because Christ is his head. In *Mulieris Dignitate* 24, John Paul II appears to take a different approach than Adrienne when he states:

However, whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church the subjection is only on the part of the Church, in the relationship between husband and wife the 'subjection' is not one-sided but mutual. In relation to the 'old' this is evidently something 'new': it is an innovation in the Gospel. [...] the awareness that in marriage there is mutual 'subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ,' and not just that of the wife to the husband, must gradually establish itself in hearts, consciences, behavior and customs. [...] All the reasons in favor of the 'subjection' of woman to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a 'mutual subjection' of both out of 'reverence for Christ.' The measure of true spousal love

¹¹⁹Cf. *Ep*, 185-186. [224-226]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 20-22.

¹²⁰Cf. *I K*, 315: "Das Weib kann im Mann nicht ein absolutes Haupt erblicken [sic]; christlich gesehen ist er ihr Haupt nur, weil Christus sein Haupt ist. Dadurch ist das Weib nicht nur nicht gedemütigt, sondern erhöht, während der Mann als Haupt sich vor Christus demütigen muß, um seine Erhöhung zu tragen." Cf. *1 Cor* 11, 3.

finds its deepest source in Christ, who is the Bridegroom of the Church his Bride.¹²¹

In other words, it is clear that the Pontiff interprets *Eph* 5, 22-23 in the light of verse 5, 21.¹²² The question arises however: Is John Paul asserting that the spouses' mutual subjection excludes the wife's subjection to the husband? Moreover, can John Paul's position, which he calls an "innovation of the Gospel," be reconciled with Adrienne's?

It is evident that the spouses' mutual subjection and the wife's subjection to her husband are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the key to understanding *Mulieris Dignitatem* 24, and to reconciling it with Adrienne's insights, lies in the Pope's observation that the woman's subjection to the man is to be understood in the light of the spouses' mutual subjection out of "reverence for Christ." In other words, John Paul's position is completely compatible with Adrienne's observation since both writers emphasize that subjection, whether mutual or that of the woman to the man, be understood *in Christ*. If the man takes advantage of his elevated position, he is no longer Christ-like and thus, cannot truly represent Christ to the woman. No man or woman has subjected him or herself as much as Christ subjected himself to all men and women. The man must always bear this in mind if he is to be truly the head of the woman and the family.

In Christ, therefore, subjection becomes a way of sanctification.¹²³ And in subjecting herself to the man, the woman sanctifies herself. However, in her holy example of obedience she can also draw an unfaithful husband to the Lord, thereby sanctifying him as well. Adrienne describes the woman's obedience as encompassing the man's obedience. In a sense, she vouches for his obedience. Yet, knowing that she cannot do this alone she relies on the help of the community of saints in order to win him over to the Lord.¹²⁴

While the man looks to Christ as his model of headship, the woman looks to the Body, the Church as her model of subjection. Adrienne writes of the woman: "She will find herself mirrored again and again in the various manifestations of the Church."¹²⁵ Therefore, in her inborn readiness to love, the woman will recognize herself in the figure of the Samaritan woman at the well (*Jn* 4, 1-42). When the Samaritan woman asks the Lord for the living water, she desires to be known by the Lord and to be led further by him, just as the Church allows herself to be led further into love by the Lord.¹²⁶ Or the woman will recognize herself in Mary Magdalen at the tomb of the resurrected Lord. In her giving over, Magdalen resembles the "wife who has not yet wholly belonged to her husband: she is ready

¹²¹*MD*, 24.

¹²²*Cf. Eph* 5, 21-23: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior."

¹²³*Cf. K*, 106. [134]: "Unterordnung ist jetzt nicht mehr erzwungene, qualvolle Demütigung, sie ist Heiligung in den Herrn hinein, Ordnung in seine Ordnung." *Cf. Col* 3, 18.

¹²⁴*Cf. Ka I*, 337: "Der Gehorsam der Frau an den Mann erschöpft sich also nicht in sich selbst, in der fraulichen Untertänigkeit; er geht weiter und schließt die Gehorsamstat des Mannes dem Worte gegenüber ein: die Frau hat dem Manne zu gehorchen, um den Gehorsam des Mannes an das Wort zu verbürgen. Sie schließt in ihrem Gehorsam an den Mann den des Mannes an das Wort ein, weil ihr Gehorsam ein Verantwortungsgehorsam ist." *Cf. 1 Pt* 3, 1.

¹²⁵*Cf. Ep*, 187. [227]. *Cf. Eph* 5, 23.

¹²⁶*Cf. Jo I*, 295. [226]. *Cf. Jn* 4, 15.

for it, but she does not yet know what the husband will make of her giving over.”¹²⁷ Thus, in the Samaritan woman, in Mary Magdalen and especially in the Mother of the Lord, the woman knows models of holy subjection in the Lord.

As noted above, Adrienne’s strong emphasis on the man’s headship and the woman’s subjection may sound harsh to modern ears. In the light of women’s liberation, perhaps many people feel that *Ephesians* 5, 22-23 has been replaced by a non-hierarchical model of the relationship between man and woman in marriage. They may argue that Paul’s exhortation was simply based on the cultural circumstances of his time when some considered that women were unequal in dignity to men. This, however, is not the case. As noted by Adrienne, the woman’s subjection to the man is a *theological, transcultural* reality based on the relationships of Christ to the Church and of the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Spouses subject oneself to one other in an authentic way when they recognize that each has equal dignity and each possesses God-given roles in marriage.

10.3.3 The Obedience of Children to Parents

Adrienne underscores that the obedience of children to their parents, like the woman’s subjection and the man’s headship, is included within the ecclesial order. Only in Christ’s union with his Church do all three forms of obedience find their ultimate *raison d’être*. Thus, parents must know that the love and responsibility they show towards their children constitute an ecclesial responsibility founded in the Lord. Parents should be well-grounded in the teachings of the Lord and his Church, so that they can transmit these to their children.¹²⁸ In this way, it becomes clear that the obedience of the child to his parents is fruit of the parents’ obedience to God.¹²⁹

Adrienne’s affirmation that the child’s obedience is fruit of his parents’ obedience leads to several further points. Firstly, when parents are obedient to God in the duties of marriage and family life, they feel more free to exact the same standards of obedience on their children. For example, when spouses live their marriage chastely, they feel no contradiction in their hearts when they impress upon their teenage son or daughter the importance of living chastely.¹³⁰ Secondly, there is a certain “overflowing” of the spiritual fruitfulness borne out of the parents’ obedient attitude. Thus, children benefit from the

¹²⁷Cf. *Jo* IV, 231. [190]. Cf. *Jn* 20, 16.

¹²⁸Cf. *K*, 107-109. [136-138]. Cf. *Col* 3, 20-21. Cf. *Ep*, 202. [245-246]. Children must grow together with their father and mother into the Son’s obedience to the Father. Adrienne continues: “Und wie der Herr seine Kirche für sich gebildet hat, um sie mitzunehmen zum Vater, so werden die Väter versuchen, ihre Kinder im Sinne der Kirche zu bilden, um sie in der Kirche dem Herrn zuwachsen zu lassen.” Cf. *Eph* 6, 4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Paul’s exhortation refers to fathers. However, it is applied here to both the father and the mother. Certainly, both parents are challenged to always grow in their knowledge and understanding of their Catholic faith in order to further their own sanctification and that of their children. Parents are the primary teachers of the faith to their children. Cf. *LG*, 11: “In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.”

¹²⁹Cf. *Ep*, 199-200. [242-243]. Cf. *Eph* 5, 32.

¹³⁰Cf. *GS*, 50: “Married people should realize that in their behavior they may not simply follow their own fancy but must be ruled by conscience—and conscience ought to be conformed to the law of God in the light of the teaching authority of the Church, which is the authentic interpreter of the divine law.”

graces which flow from parental love that is “caught up into divine love,” and “directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church.”¹³¹ Thirdly, nonetheless, there are situations when children of faithful parents are disobedient. How can this be explained? Ultimately, it cannot. Serious disobedience is sin, a distortion of the truth and leads to incomprehension. Paul’s exhortation is meant to encourage parents to be obedient to God’s commandments. Parents do all they can to lead obedient lives with the help of God’s grace. However, in the end, they must leave the rest in God’s hands.

As their model of obedience, not only do children look to their parents, but also, and above all, they look to Jesus whose obedience to Mary and Joseph was a concretization of his obedience to his heavenly Father. By living his whole life according to the will of the Father, the Son allowed himself to be “generated passively” by the Father just as “the child generated in the mother’s womb is only letting-be, complete obedience.”¹³² Adrienne explains how the Lord gives to the Church his relationship to the Father so that she too can benefit from its fruits and stand in reverence to the Father as he does. Thus, all children should honor and obey their parents according to the model and grace of Christ’s reverence and obedience to his Father.¹³³

Just as the mutual subjection of the spouses, the husband’s headship and the wife’s subjection are founded on the Christ-Church relationship, so too the obedience of children to their parents is established in Christ who lived in obedience to his earthly parents and to his Father in heaven. Therefore, the family as the *domestic Church* looks to Christ who lives obedience concretely to Mary and Joseph and through them to the Father. In other words, the human family looks to the first *domestic Church*, the Holy Family, in order to live in obedience not only in their relations with each other, but also in obedience to their salvific mission of the Church as a whole. The enriching of the Church depends on families that live zealously and obediently the call to holiness that is specific to the state of marriage.¹³⁴

10.4 Prayer and Sacramental Life in Marriage and Family

Christian marriage unites man and woman to each other in Christ. In order to persevere and grow in their marriage, husband and wife know that they must communicate with each other and grow deeper in their love. At the same time, Adrienne underscores the

¹³¹GS, 48.

¹³²Ep, 17, [21]. Cf. Eph 1, 2.

¹³³Cf. Ep, 57, [68]. Cf. Eph 6, 2.

¹³⁴Cf. LG, 11: “From the marriage of Christians there comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, those are made children of God so that the People of God may be perpetuated throughout the centuries. In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.” Cf. LG, 35: “In it the married partners have their own proper vocation: they must be witnesses of faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children.” Cf. FC, 49: “Among the fundamental tasks of the Christian family is its ecclesial task: the family is placed at the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church.” Cf. A. Scola, “Spiritualità coniugale,” 47: “Il tema della ‘famiglia-chiesa-domestica,’ poi, non va inteso come se la realtà della vita familiare e della coppia possa al suo interno esaurire un adeguato orizzonte ecclesiale. Piuttosto la famiglia, se vuole essere fino in fondo fedele alla sua vocazione, deve imparare a respirare di tutto il contenuto della vita della comunità cristiana, deve fare proprio il respiro della Chiesa come tale.”

importance that each spouse communicate with God in prayer. In turn, parents play an indispensable role in introducing their children to prayer. Moreover, even before a state of life is chosen, prayer is especially important for proper discernment. When one does choose to marry, during the time of preparation for marriage, a routine of prayer should already be established that would carry over into married life. Throughout the journey of faith, the sacraments of Eucharist and confession are essential for further growth in the spiritual life and for closer communion with God and with each other in marriage and the family.

10.4.1 Pre-Marriage Prayer

Whether one is in remote, proximate or immediate preparation for marriage, prayer plays an important role in one's *discernment of a state of life*, in *establishing a routine of prayer* and in *preserving one's purity* of body and spirit. First of all, Adrienne clarifies that the decision to marry demands careful *discernment*.¹³⁵ Discernment in an atmosphere of prayerful objectivity is carried out, above all, in prayer whether during the "exercises" [*Exerzitien*] or outside them.¹³⁶ If one has already fallen in love, it is difficult to make an objective choice to marry.¹³⁷ Adrienne notes that often young people who choose marriage do not base their choice on a prayer of open "indifference" to living whichever state God so chooses for that person. Many times young men and women choose marriage, *then* they think of asking the Lord to bless their decision. Rather than allowing God to have a part in one's life from the beginning, one wants to control things. Consequently, the desire for total

¹³⁵Cf. *Chr*, 7: "Daß der Weg gerade am Anfang nicht richtig gewählt wurde, wird oft zu spät erkannt." *Chr*, 50: "Die Zeit der Bekanntschaft ist eine Zeit des gegenseitigen Sich-kennen-lernens; zwei junge Menschen, die sich zueinander gezogen fühlen, sollen erfahren, ob richtige Liebe sich in ihnen entwickelt und aus ihr das Dauerhafte, das die Ehe bedeutet, werden kann." *Chr*, 79: "Du willst immer noch wählen und weißt nicht, daß die Wahl, die endgültige, schon hinter Dir liegt." *Chr*, 100: "Hat sich der Mann die Ehe so vorgestellt, wie die Wochenblätter sie ihm vorzeichnen oder wie die Träume der Verlobungszeit sie malten, so hat er Müde, sich an die Wirklichkeit zu gewöhnen oder sie gar zu erleben." *Chr*, 138-139: "Es gibt Wege, die sich früher schon deutlich zeichnen, so deutlich, daß die Frage eigentlich nicht gestellt werden muß und nur die Antwort erwartet wird. Es gibt das Geheimnis der Berufung, der unwiderstehlichen, zwingenden, der sich nichts entgegensetzen darf; dabei werden Einwände sofort entkräftet, und Hemmnisse verwandeln sich in sichere Bestätigungen. [...] Richtig überlegen heißt vor allem: keine Stimme, die in Dir wach wird, zum Verstummen bringen, bevor Du sie geprüft hast, richtig überlegen heißt aber auch, Deine Träume und die Wirklichkeit nicht miteinander verwechseln, und schließlich noch: Deinen Willen und Deine Wünsche als die Deinen anerkennen und Dir nicht einbilden, sie seien ohne weiteres der Wille und die Wünsche Gottes." *Chr*, 142-143: "Aber die Wahl soll mit einem wahren Wissen um beide getroffen werden. Unkenntnis des einen Standes darf niemals der Grund dafür sein, die Wahl des anderen als einzigen Weg erscheinen zu lassen. [...] Das heißt, es gibt nur einen Weg, den letztlich Er [der Herr] für Dich bereitet hat."

¹³⁶Cf. *St*, 94. [94-95]: "Kam es zu einer echten Wahl, so vollzug sie sich irgendwie im Gebet, sei es in oder außerhalb von Exerzitien." Adrienne does not specify here the nature of the "exercises." Most certainly, in general, she is referring to "spiritual exercises" or some kind of a retreat. She would have been familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Although Ignatius is not mentioned here, it could be understood that she has his *Exercises* in mind especially *Exercise* numbers 169 to 189, that deal explicitly with making a choice for a state of life.

¹³⁷Cf. *St*, 142. [142]: "Nicht selten spielt die erotische Erfahrung, die zur menschlichen Natur gehört, in der Zeit der Wahl eine entscheidende Rolle. Man ist in ein Mädchen verliebt oder durch das eigene Treibleben beunruhigt [...] Man ist nicht frei und unbeschwert, sondern irgendwo gebunden, auch wenn man sich noch nicht eigentlich verlobt hat."

control continues in married life as the spouses determine in which parts of their life they will allow God to participate.¹³⁸ An authentic decision to marry is affirmed by God when one brings before the Lord one's inclination to marry and subsequently feels an enriched prayer life and a closer relationship to the Lord.¹³⁹

During the time of preparation for marriage engaged persons should *establish a routine of prayer*. Mainly, "they should adapt their busy schedule and the circumstances of their life to their prayer and not their prayer to the circumstances of their life."¹⁴⁰ In other words, no matter how hectic their lives become in the months leading up to their marriage, engaged persons should carve out of each day or week, regular times for prayer. If they wait until marriage to try to establish a routine of prayer, it may be too late; they will have already laid down a daily or weekly routine that does not include prayer.¹⁴¹

In establishing a life of prayer, however, the engaged persons do not normally pray together. Adrienne insists that fiancé and fiancée should learn to pray alone and spend some important time in solitude. She underscores that one cannot decipher one's feelings genuinely only in the time that is spent with the other. Solitude helps provide objectivity and offers an occasion to uncover and confront potential difficulties that may arise in the relationship.¹⁴² Certainly, Adrienne's advice does not preclude that an engaged couple might attend Mass or another liturgical service together, for example, within the context of a youth group activity. Mainly, her advice regarding the engaged person's private prayer stems from her understanding of the veil of intimacy that envelops one's prayer life. Only marriage provides the foundation for a wider sharing of one's personal prayer life. Nevertheless, even in marriage, each spouse nurtures his or her own intimate relationship with God.

Furthermore, prayer helps the engaged persons to *preserve their purity* of body and spirit. During engagement, man and woman experience the yearnings of their bodies in different ways. Because the man has a greater awareness of the sexual drive and its demands, his renunciation is more clearly defined than the woman's. The woman feels a longing to give herself over both to God and the man, but she does not feel pressed to fix a boundary between the two forms of giving over. The man, neither ignoring his sexual yearnings nor trying to discover all that they entail, entrusts this awakening mystery to God. The woman does the same but in a less conscious way. Mainly, in her prayer she must prepare herself for every forthcoming giving over. Adrienne writes: "Both of them should recognize more and more that the mysteries of their forthcoming marriage are also mysteries

¹³⁸Cf. W, 134-136. [148-150].

¹³⁹Cf. W, 172. [190]: "Und wenn die Absicht oder der Mensch, in das Gespräch mit Gott einbezogen, sich darin einfügt, wenn das Gebet bereichert und entschlossener wird, die Nähe zu Gott nicht gestört, sondern im Gegenteil gefördert wird, dann wird ihm auch Klarheit, vielleicht Gewißheit über sein Vorhaben zuströmen."

¹⁴⁰Cf. W, 176. [193]: "Während der Verlobung darf man nicht sein Gebet den Umständen anpassen, man muß die Umstände seinem Gebet anpassen. Sonst verändern sich die Umstände so rasch, daß für das Gebet kein Platz mehr bleibt."

¹⁴¹Cf. W, 176. [193].

¹⁴²Cf. Chr, 24: "So darf auch während dieser Zeit die Einsamkeit nicht fehlen. Die wirkliche Wahrheit über seine Gefühle kann man nicht nur im Zusammensein erkennen; es ist dazu auch das Alleinsein erforderlich, das mehr Einheitlich und Objectivität gewährt."

of prayer. Filled with this recognition, they should give their prayer over to God as gift."¹⁴³

10.4.2 Prayer in Marriage and Family

Just as it is imperative that engaged persons establish a good routine of prayer, so too Christian spouses should make time to pray: both together and individually. When spouses pray together, they encourage each other in the life of prayer.¹⁴⁴ However, although it is certainly important that spouses pray communally and go together to the church for Mass, to receive the sacrament of confession or to practice a particular devotion, it is imperative that each spouse be allowed to maintain a certain undisturbed intimacy with God. Therefore, they may go hand in hand to the church to receive the sacrament of penance individually, but afterwards each does not discuss the contents of the confession.¹⁴⁵ Likewise with prayer, because each spouse nurtures his own intimacy with God, one should not try to impose one's own spiritual terms on the other. Spouses may pray the "Our Father" or the Rosary together, but each spouse has the right to his own mysteries with God.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, it is possible that a spouse may freely share a spiritual insight with the other, but it would be completely misguided for one spouse to interrogate the other over something experienced in prayer.¹⁴⁷

Although husband and wife will set aside time to pray, just their abiding in each other's presence can become a "prayer of being" [*Gebet des Seins*], a verbal or non-verbal communion that opens a way of communicating with God through one's beloved. A spouse can feel moved to prayer by the way the other gives of oneself to him or her. Or perhaps simply by appreciating the other's God-given gifts and attributes in a new light, a spouse will feel compelled to communicate with God. Adrienne writes: "Involuntarily and unsuspectingly, the person who loves God is continually opening doors of prayer for everyone who loves him and shares his life."¹⁴⁸ In marriage, then, each spouse opens a way to God through one's very being. In this way, the man reveals God to the woman and the woman reveals God to the man.

Drawing an analogy between prayer and the conjugal act, Adrienne underscores the spiritual dimension of each. She writes: "As the bodily act of love immediately opens into

¹⁴³W, 173-174. [190-191].

¹⁴⁴Cf. W, 176-177. [194]: "Etwas im gemeinsamen Gebet wird an das gemeinsam empfangene Sakrament erinnern und das Eheleben mit all seinen Freuden und Schwierigkeiten neu in dessen Unlöslichkeit fügen."

¹⁴⁵Cf. MH, 64. [59]: "So schützen christliche Eheleute ihr Geheimnis, das jedes Gott gegenüber hat. Sie gehen Hand in Hand in die Kirche, aber was jedes von ihnen gebeichtet hat, darüber sprechen sie nicht nachträglich miteinander. Und dieses Schweigen begrenzt und stört ihre Intimität nicht."

¹⁴⁶Cf. Chr, 131-132.

¹⁴⁷Cf. Ep, 36. [43-44]: "Liebende, die miteinander beten oder über Göttliches betrachten, werden einander nachher nicht ausfragen, was sie in ihrem Gebet erlebt haben; vielleicht werden sie einander dies oder jenes spontan erzählen, aber sie werden nichts vermissen, was nicht besprochen wurde. Die Liebenden werden nicht selbst die Grenzen dessen festsetzen, was anzuvertrauen ist, worauf sie gar als Liebende einen Anspruch erheben könnten, sie werden diese Grenzsetzung immer den andern überlassen."

¹⁴⁸W, 16-17. [22-23]. Adrienne emphasizes that spouses can communicate "with God through one's beloved." However, it is clear that in a spiritually grounded relationship, the spouses will also "communicate with each other through God."

an overwhelming state of love, so each individual prayer bursts into a wealth of contemplation.”¹⁴⁹ Thus, the conjugal *act* is meant to draw the spouses into the *state* of love. In its merely human qualifications, the conjugal act is ephemeral and finite. However, when seen as something that is taken up into divine love and sanctified, fortified and brought beyond itself into a *state* of love, it transcends itself as a human act and becomes a revelatory human-divine act in which one spouse reveals oneself to the other. As in each spouses’ self-revelation, God is revealed as well. Adrienne explains: “If their love is pure, they catch a glimpse of their fuller embodiment of God’s love beyond and within this physical form of their love, and they are led to adoration, thanksgiving, giving over and submission.”¹⁵⁰ In this way, God enriches conjugal love not only with the possibility of bodily fruitfulness, but also, and primarily, with the possibility of spiritual fruitfulness.¹⁵¹

The spouses’ “embodiment of God’s love,” therefore, witnesses to the “constant acceptance and giving over, self-opening and self-revealing, being shown and loving” of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the fruitfulness and equal nature of the Father and the Son. It is as if the Father and the Son see in the Spirit the “overfulfillment” of their love. It becomes a type of trinitarian adoration and prayer.¹⁵² But unlike the prayer of the spouses, trinitarian prayer knows no lapses. The tension between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is continually maintained by fresh revelations of each Person’s perfection, giving, receiving and fruitfulness.¹⁵³

Furthermore, the spouses’ prayer life is enriched by their children. Newlyweds will pray that God bless them with children. Should the wife become pregnant, the spouses’ prayer becomes one of thanksgiving and of petition for protection, without being superstitious.¹⁵⁴ Later, the parents will teach their child how to pray. In essence, the invisible world of prayer takes on a concreteness in the visible and loving arms of the mother who takes her child in her arms, enfolds his hands in hers and prays.¹⁵⁵ Thus, through the parents’ prayerfulness, the child is initiated into prayer. At the same time, the parents’ prayer is strengthened. They give thanks for God’s goodness and strive to be prayerful examples for their children.

¹⁴⁹W, 17. [23-24].

¹⁵⁰W, 17. [24]. Cf. *Ka I*, 345: “Der Mann wird in seinem Gebet kein Hindernis fühlen, wenn seine Ehrfurcht vor dem heiligen Gott eine Einheit bildet mit seiner Ehrfurcht vor der Frau, die am ewigen Leben Gottes teilhat.” Cf. *1 Pt* 3, 7.

¹⁵¹Cf. W, 40. [47]: “Und Gott hat den Menschen, um die Langeweile in der Liebe zu vermeiden, zwei Dinge geschenkt: einmal das Geschlecht mit der Möglichkeit, leiblich fruchtbar zu sein, Kinder zu haben [...] Aber darüber hinaus hat Gott ein weit größeres Geschenk gemacht: er hat der menschlichen Liebe Anteil gewährt an seiner eigenen göttlichen Liebe.” As noted above in *Chapter 9* (subsection 9.4.1), the conjugal act, formed in grace, is elevated to an *ecclesial, existential and fruitful* act. Adrienne shows here how it can be a *prayerful* act as well. Ultimately, it should lead the spouses to a more profound prayer life, to participation in trinitarian life and to a spirit of thanksgiving to God for the many gifts of marriage.

¹⁵²Cf. W, 24-25. [32]: “Es gibt kein sich Verschließen und sich Zurückziehen vor dem andern, nur immerwährendes Hinnehmen und Hingeben, Sichöffnen und Sichzeigen, Gezeiftwerden und Lieben.”

¹⁵³Cf. W, 27. [34-35].

¹⁵⁴Cf. W, 178-180. [196-198].

¹⁵⁵Cf. W, 114-115. [126-127].

As the child grows up, his progress in the faith can lead to a deepening in that of his parents'. He will learn the Catholic catechism at school, but will also ask his parents questions that prompt them to review the tenets of the faith that they have perhaps forgotten.¹⁵⁶ Most importantly the young child must learn to pray on his own. Unfortunately, often children never progress beyond learning to recite certain vocal prayers. Hence, they do not discover the beauty of prayer. Later, when they would need a strong prayer life to help them discern an important life decision, they would have no good habits of prayer from which to draw.¹⁵⁷ In any case, the parents must allow their children to develop a personal prayer life and allow them to draw their own conclusions based on their prayer.¹⁵⁸

While Adrienne emphasizes the importance that each family member nurture an *individual* prayer life, the Magisterium has often expounded on the merits of *common* prayer. In 1941, Pope Pius XII addressed some recently married couples on the theme of common prayer:

All Christians, who also pray in their own particular meditation, must make room in their life also for common prayer. This reminds them that they are brethren in Christ and they are obliged to save their souls not in an isolated way, but by mutual help. If all Christians should pray in this way, how much more your prayer must not separate you, almost like hermits, and place you in a solitary meditation, in such a way to not allow you to discover yourselves independent before God and his altar.¹⁵⁹

In another allocution, Pius XII compared the family home to that of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and underscored the importance of family prayer.¹⁶⁰ Clearly, Pius XII's statements witness to a long tradition of underscoring the importance of prayer in the family's sanctification and of encouraging all types of prayer: private, communal, devotional and reception of the sacraments.¹⁶¹ Vatican Council II underlined that prayer is essential to holy family life¹⁶² and Pope Paul VI exhorted spouses to draw frequently from the sources of grace in receiving the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation.¹⁶³

In continuing the motherly encouragement of the Church to her children, John Paul II has also indicated that prayer in the family is essential: "Only by praying together with their children can a father and mother---exercising their royal priesthood---penetrate the innermost depth of their children's hearts and leave an impression that the future events in their lives will not be able to efface."¹⁶⁴ Moreover, John Paul has shown how family prayer encourages discovery of religious vocations: "Then, Christian parents become able to consider the blossoming of a vocation to the priesthood or to be a religious missionary as one of the more beautiful proofs of the authenticity of the Christian education which they

¹⁵⁶Cf. W, 180-181. [199].

¹⁵⁷Cf. W, 120-124. [132-137].

¹⁵⁸Cf. W, 182. [200].

¹⁵⁹Pius XII, Allocution *Grande conforto* (1941), EF, Vol. II, 961-962.

¹⁶⁰Pius XII, Allocution *Como una nueva* (1957), EF, Vol. III, 1638.

¹⁶¹CC, 100.

¹⁶²GS, 48-49.

¹⁶³HV, 25.

¹⁶⁴FC, 60.

impart, and they pray that the Lord will call one of their children.”¹⁶⁵

The Church has always emphasized that spouses are to pray in order to sanctify their union and the family. As parents, they are to initiate their children into the life of prayer. Therefore, parents should receive frequently the sacraments of Eucharist and penance to help them to grow in sanctification and to be leaders in holiness for their children. Adrienne’s insight that each spouse develop an intimate prayerful relationship with God has much relevance today. Catholic spouses, especially in the United States, often attend Sunday Mass readily and faithfully, thus fulfilling, at least partially and exteriorly, their obligation to pray together as a Christian family. However, even though studies and polls indicate that there exists a strong religiosity in America, it seems safe to say that this apparent religiosity does not always lead to a deeper, interior conversion of heart. In other words, on the surface Americans appear to be a religious and moral people, but in reality their religiosity does not penetrate to a deeper level where it could bring about true conversion and sanctification. Precisely here is where Adrienne’s insights on spousal prayer have much validity. By going beyond a purely mechanical type of religious practice, spouses are encouraged to grow interiorly in their relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

10.4.3 The Sacrament of the Eucharist in Marriage

Adrienne underlines that the Lord forms his Church through his Eucharist.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, as the Church’s children united in the sacrament of marriage, Christian spouses allow themselves to be formed by the Lord. Pouring himself out without reserve in an act of “pure one-sided prodigality,”¹⁶⁷ the Lord invites believers to receive his abundant eucharistic grace. The sacrament of the Eucharist, therefore, is *prodigal* giving of the Lord, on the one hand, and *receptivity* of the believer, on the other hand. The Lord, however, gives his Eucharist to believers so that they can become like him. The Eucharist is not simply a kind of “spiritual candy” that tastes good and brings to mind good thoughts of the Lord. Rather, through its reception, one is invited to imitate Christ in his self-giving and in his obedience to the Father in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁸

The Son not only gives believers his eucharistic grace, but also he manifests in his person what the Eucharist should effect in their lives. On the one hand, the Son is perfectly *prodigal* in pouring himself out to all. On the other hand, he is perfectly *receptive* to the Father. Indeed, he is fully *receptive* inasmuch as he is *prodigal*, as is the Father. For his part,

¹⁶⁵ John Paul II, Message from *La Giornata Mondiale* (1981), EF, Vol. IV, 3157-3159.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *HL*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁷ *Jo I*, 101. [83].

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Adrienne von Speyr, *Der Mensch vor Gott* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966), 20-21. Hereafter cited as *M*. Adrienne writes: “Christus nachfolgen und ihn nachahmen heißt, das Unnachahmliche, Unvergleichliche, Einmalige zur Richtschnur seines Lebens erwählen, das Vollkommene, das er ist, und das wir nie werden sein können.” Cf. William Schmitt, *The Sacrament of Confession as a ‘Sequela Christi’ in the Writings of A. von Speyr*, 272: “Following the Lord is only possible if the distance that remains between Christ and the follower is not calculated.” Cf. *M*, 57. Moreover, Schmitt notes that Adrienne does not oppose “following” and “imitating” Christ. Schmitt writes: “‘Imitating’ seems to be more concerned with the exterior deed and ‘following’ with the interior attitude. [...] Imitation can be a true expression of interior disposition.” Cf. *Be*, 21.174.240; *KaI*, 330.

the Holy Spirit witnesses to the “always greater” receptivity and prodigality of the Father and the Son. By imitating the Son in his Eucharist, therefore, believers are formed to give themselves prodigally to God and to others, and to be receptive to God and to one’s neighbor. Christian spouses, in particular, are given the sacrament of Eucharist to nurture their life of grace and to effect in their union prodigality and receptivity. The sacrament of the Eucharist, therefore, should become “incarnate” in their lives. In the same way that the Lord gives himself to them, each spouse is to give to the other and to God. In the same way that the Lord receives everything he has from the Father, spouses are to receive all that they have from God and from each other. They become enclosed within God’s grace. Adrienne writes: “Through the Son’s grace we really take on his grace; it is given to us so that we stand before the Father clothed in the Son’s grace.”¹⁶⁹

As explained in *Chapter 9* (subsection 9.3.2), Adrienne observes that the giving of the Eucharistic Lord on the Cross is both a “masculine begetting” and a “feminine suffering” in which the Son begets and gives birth at the same time.¹⁷⁰ Adrienne characterizes the Lord’s suffering as “feminine birth pangs” and his words as “masculine.” Above all, the Lord is the perfect synthesis between the masculine and the feminine, between man and woman, since all men and women are created in his image (*Col 1, 15*). Consequently, in their daily lives, Christian spouses are to imitate the Lord in the Eucharist; imitating Christ each spouse is to give and receive the other without establishing limits on their giving and receiving. In the conjugal act, the spouses are not only bestowed with a beautiful way to express their love for each other and to be physically and spiritually fruitful, but also they are given a way to imitate most profoundly the prodigality and receptivity of Christ. The man, in giving himself over, imitates the Son who gives himself over to the Church. The woman, in her receptivity, imitates the Church in her complete openness to the Lord. At the same time, she imitates the Lord’s receptivity before the Father and the Virgin Mary’s disponibility before God. Ultimately, each spouse must renounce his own substance so that their union can become physically and spiritually fruitful. In their renunciation, they imitate the Lord who is pure renunciation.¹⁷¹

10.4.4 The Sacrament of Confession in Marriage

With the Eucharist, Adrienne underlines the believer’s attitude of receptivity before the Lord’s prodigality, but with the sacrament of confession she emphasizes more one’s giving over of one’s sins to the Lord. As has been shown, confession is an act of naked self-revelation and entrustment. One stands before the Lord in an attitude of complete transparency and reveals one’s sins to him without trying to hide anything. In marriage, spouses are so intimately united to each other that it is often difficult to completely separate their sins and, therefore, their confessions. In this mutual bearing of their sins, the spouses

¹⁶⁹*Jo I*, 102. [83]. Cf. A. Scola, “Spiritualità coniugale,” 51. In his Eucharist, the Lord gives spouses a share in his trinitarian communion: “Fate questo, lasciatevi prendere eucaristicamente da me, perché io genero attraverso il dono dello Spirito la comunione tra il Padre e voi tutti. Facendo questo, cioè vivendo questo comunione, voi rendete presente me.”

¹⁷⁰*Pa*, 41–42. [46–47].

¹⁷¹Cf. *NB XII*, 108.

participate in a small way in the Lord's bearing of all sin.¹⁷² However, even though the spouses might both be guilty of a particular sin, each confesses privately. They may go together to the church to confess, but each spouse comes before the Lord in intimacy and privacy.

Just as the spouses are formed by the Lord in his Eucharist, so too they are formed in the sacrament of confession. In his nakedness on the Cross, the Lord brings the sins of all before the Father. Confession, therefore, becomes an act of following Christ as the penitent confesses one's sins "nakedly" before the Lord. The more spouses learn to entrust their sins to the Lord in complete transparency, the more each will be able to entrust oneself transparently before the other. Adrienne shows how this "transparent entrustment" is also lived on the sexual level, as each spouse entrusts oneself to the other in nakedness and transparency in the conjugal act. And the more one has this "confessional" attitude in relation to one's spouse, the more one can nurture this confessional attitude before the Lord.

10.5 Conclusion

In Adrienne's writings on spousal and familial spirituality, one discovers a profound new way of viewing the spousal sexual-spiritual realm within the trinitarian, incarnational and ecclesiological realm. Man and woman united in marriage are never one moment an image of the triune God and the next moment inserted in the Christ-Church union. All three dynamics come together and each helps explain the other. Nonetheless, full revelation of the man-woman union is found ultimately in Christ. In Adrienne's writings on matrimonial spirituality, "theology receives a whole new embodiment" and "sexuality [...] receives permanent access to the contents of theology."¹⁷³

In this chapter, Adrienne von Speyr's contributions in the area of spousal and familial spirituality have been gathered together and commented upon in three steps. First, the integration of spirituality and sexuality was examined. Second, the Christo-ecclesial roles of man, woman and child were discussed. Third, Adrienne's thought on prayer and the sacramental life in marriage and family was penetrated.

In the area of matrimonial *spirituality and sexuality*, it was shown how mystery and intimacy in the spousal relationship are intertwined. True intimacy does not imply one must discover everything about the other. On the contrary, true intimacy is found in marriage when man and woman preserve an awe and respect before God's mysteries. Revealing their love for each other in the conjugal act, the spouses imitate in a small way the prodigality of the Lord's Eucharist and his confessional attitude. Caught up in the love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, man and woman imitate and embody trinitarian love. Moreover, it was considered in an *excursus* how Adrienne von Speyr's trinitarian reflections on the conjugal act open towards the possibility of drawing analogies between the Trinity and the family. Focusing on the fruitfulness of the conjugal act, it was shown how spouses can selfishly thwart God's gift of bodily and spiritual fruitfulness. Also, we saw how in their greatly different experiences of pregnancy and parturition, man and woman gain deeper insight into their spiritual and physical fertility. Christian spouses can look to the Virgin Mary's

¹⁷²Be, 157-158. [144].

¹⁷³H.U. von Balthasar, Foreword to: A. von Speyr, *Theologie der Geschlechter*, 7.

experience of parturition to better understand the intermingling of fruitfulness and suffering in marriage. Finally, Adrienne underscores how those who give pastoral and spiritual direction to engaged couples and spouses, namely priests and marriage counselors, should approach the sexual realm with discretion and naturalness.

Regarding the *roles of man, woman and child*, Adrienne emphasizes that they are always to be understood within the realm of the Christ-Church relationship. As the head of the marriage and the family, the man gives himself over to the woman as Christ gives himself over to the Church. Cognizant that he can never perfectly imitate Christ in his headship, the man humbly accepts his role and carries it out in service of the woman. Subjected to the man, the woman gives herself over as the Church gives herself to Christ. She finds models of obedient subjection in the Virgin Mary, the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalen. The child, too, is inserted in the Christo-ecclesial dimension. He must know that his obedience is not simply a kind of blind following of an objective rule, but that he follows Christ who lived in obedience to his earthly father and mother, and through them was obedient to his Father in heaven. Together, in their life of communion and holiness, father, mother and children make up the *domestic Church*, breathing new life into the whole Church.

Establishing and maintaining *prayer and the sacramental life in marriage* actually begins in the time before marriage. Adrienne shows how one develops a prayer relationship with God already at a very young age. It is imperative that a young child see prayer as a beautiful way to communicate with the Lord, rather than simply an utterance of some memorized prayers. By discovering the beauty of prayer early on in life, the adolescent will be able to discern clearly between the states of life and make a choice according to God's will. For those who discern marriage, it is important that a good routine of prayer is already established before marriage. Furthermore, engaged persons can entrust their sexual yearnings to God in their prayer.

In marriage, each spouse develops a personal, intimate prayer life with God. Certainly, spouses might pray certain common prayers together, but each spouse should have time alone in meditation and contemplation. By their participation in the sacraments of confession and Eucharist, Christian spouses are formed by the Lord. Often united in a common sin, spouses experience in a small way the Lord's bearing of sin. Yet, by confessing "nakedly" to the Lord, they follow him in his act of giving over to the Father. In receiving the Eucharist, man and woman experience the Lord's pure prodigality. In turn, they are moved to imitate it in their lives. Aided by God's grace, spouses live "confessionally" and "eucharistically" thereby allowing themselves to be formed by the Lord and united closer to each other and to him.

General Conclusion

In the final section of this dissertation, we have a chance to cast light on several prominent elements of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage, to address a few unanswered questions and to make some closing remarks. In this work, we have proceeded in three steps. First, we considered how Adrienne von Speyr's writings in general, and those on marriage and family in particular, were fruit of her life, mission and the theological task which she shared with Hans Urs von Balthasar. Second, we tried to understand the *content* and the particular *mode of expression* of Adrienne's insights within the context of a given work. Third, we brought these insights together and subjected them to the scrutinizing light of the current theology of marriage, especially drawing from the contributions of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Pope John Paul II. In the final section of this work, rather than summarizing what has already been said, we will bring into sharper focus the main characteristics of Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage with the help of some key German terms which have emerged throughout our exposition and analysis.

I. Characteristics of Adrienne von Speyr's Theology of Marriage

A. *Christological: Prodigal Giving Over (Hingabe)*

At the heart of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Indeed, Adrienne sees every facet of marriage through a christological lens. This was noted in her writings on Creation, where it was demonstrated how the Son accompanies Adam and Eve with concern and even endures his first human experience in Adam's sin. Furthermore, it was demonstrated how the Son, eternally ready to redeem the marriage union, sanctifies the man-woman relationship "from within" by being born of Woman, by living in a human Family, through his words and deeds and ultimately by giving himself for his Bride, the Church on the Cross.

Adrienne does not flinch from grappling with the mysteries of Christ in his human and divine natures. She sees him pre-figured in the noble bridegroom of *The Song of Songs*. Also, Adrienne notes how Jesus is the embodiment of the man at the wedding feast at Cana. Moreover, in her keen insights regarding the body of Jesus, she portrays how Christ's spiritual sacrifice on the Cross surpasses and encompasses all bodily travails and simultaneously gives meaning to all suffering, in general, and to the pain of parturition, in particular. It also becomes clear how Jesus' obedience to the Father is the theological foundation for the roles of man and woman in marriage. Other models of matrimonial roles which are not centered on Christ are ultimately inadequate. Finally, it was clarified that Christian spouses are to embody the Lord's "eucharistic" prodigality and "confessional" attitude in their lives.

B. *Marian: Readiness (Bereitschaft)*

The assent or Yes-word [*Jawort*] which Mary utters at the Annunciation and continues to live throughout her whole life is a most fundamental model for Christian marriage. By consenting to give oneself to the other and to God in sacramental marriage, Christian spouses who imitate and embody Mary's active readiness are rewarded by the Lord's abundant fruitfulness. Marian disponibility is a readiness to receive not only the joys,

but also the sorrows of life. When spouses consent every day of their married life to give oneself to the other “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do [them] part,” they embody the Virgin Mother’s Yes-word. Adrienne clarifies that it is precisely at the foot of the Cross that the Lord lavishly pours out his fruitfulness to Mary and the newborn Church. As the Child-Jesus, the Son sanctified the union between Mary and Joseph. As the dying Savior, the Lord blesses the union of Mary and John. Both Joseph and John in union with Mary serve as important models for Christian marriage. Joseph is a model of patience, courage and manliness. John is a model of love, discipleship and witness. Mary is model of disponibility, bodily and spiritual fruitfulness.

C. Ecclesial: Ecclesial Concretization (*kirchliche Konkretisierung*)

By the grace of the marriage sacrament, man and woman are inserted into the Christ-Church union. Adrienne’s writings on marriage, which often evince sharp images of a concretely incarnate Church, provide rich insights into the mystery of spousal participation in the Christ-Church union. This “ecclesial concretization” was seen in Adrienne’s commentary on *The Song of Songs*, in the meditations on Jesus’ bodiliness during the Passion, in the many reflections on the Virgin Mary and in the “theology of the sexes.” With the sacrament of marriage and regular reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and confession, man and woman are led more profoundly into bodily and spiritual union with Christ. It is precisely because this Christ-Church union is indissoluble that marriage is an irrevocable choice for spouses. On the one hand, because a particular marriage covenant shares a unity with all other marriages in the Church, when a man and a woman sever their marriage union, they contribute towards a weakening of the Church’s resolve of her members to remain closely united to Christ. On the other hand, spouses and their children, who strive towards holiness as a “domestic Church,” participate in the deepening of the Church’s unity with Christ.

D. Trinitarian: Integration into Trinitarian Life (*Integration ins Trinitarische*)

In Adrienne von Speyr’s spiritual theology of marriage, the man-woman union is often considered in the light of the Trinity. Many actualities of matrimonial life do not only receive their theological justification departing from the Trinity, but also they are to be integrated into trinitarian life. Adrienne considers marriage roles, the giving and receiving of everyday matrimonial life, openness to spiritual and bodily fruitfulness and the sexual sphere of man and woman under the movements of the eternal exchange among the divine Persons. Ultimately, the Redemption of marriage is the fruit of the giving and receiving of the Father and the Son in the Spirit who unites them and gives testimony of their love. However, unity in marriage is achieved when man and woman, in imitation of the divine Persons, allow for the other’s distinctiveness. It is the polarity among the Persons and between the spouses that affects and preserves their unity.

E. Sacramental: Fruitfulness (*Fruchtbarkeit*)

Receiving the sacrament of marriage as a new unity, spouses open themselves to God’s grace with the cognizance that any God-given spiritual or bodily fruitfulness is to be placed at the Lord’s disposal for further enrichment in the life of the spouses and the

Church. Allowing themselves to be molded by the Lord through frequent reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and confession, man and woman become sanctified in their state of life. In their openness before the Lord in sacramental confession, each learns to live transparently before the other and God. The Eucharist, as the incarnate testimony of the prodigality and receptivity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, forms the spouses in the “school of sanctified giving and receiving” of one another in the Lord. In this way, Adrienne underscores that the sacramental life is to become existential in marriage.

F. *Incarnational: Embodiment (Verleiblichung) and Bodiliness (Leiblichkeit)*

Adrienne von Speyr’s theology of marriage is permeated by an acute awareness of the incarnational characteristics of marriage. The themes of embodiment and bodiliness were considered in the persons of Adam and Eve, Jesus Christ, Mary, the Church, the Eucharist and the Christian spouses. Acknowledging the preeminent fruitfulness of Christ’s redeeming virginal love, Adrienne underscores that the bodily fruitfulness of man and woman is justified and made sacrament in the consummation of the Son’s synchronous bodily begetting and espousing of the Church on the Cross. Viewing the order of Creation in the light of the christological and ecclesial order of Redemption, Adrienne sustains that paradisaical fruitfulness was at once virginal and bodily. With sin, the enmeshing of virginal and bodily fruitfulness would only be realized in Christ, the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary. Nonetheless, the virginal meaning of the body, which evokes man and woman’s paradisaical roots, is to be preserved and nurtured in marriage. Authentic spousal bodily giving and receiving is carried out with a reverence towards conjugal love’s underlying mysteries which testify to its divine origin.

Both married and virginal consecrated love testify to Christ’s love for the Church. Each is a state of holiness and each brings fruitfulness in its own way to the Church. In marriage, the spiritual and bodily relation between man and woman is consecrated by Christ who in turn bestows his fruitfulness on the marriage union. In consecrated virginity, following Christ and in imitation of Mary, one gives one’s body and spirit over to the Lord for further fruitfulness in the world. The consecrated person witnesses in a special way to Christ’s poverty, virginity and obedience.

G. *Spiritual: Spiritual Fruitfulness (geistliche Fruchtbarkeit)*

A strong spousal and familial spirituality emerges from Adrienne von Speyr’s writings. By constantly linking the mysteries of marriage and family life to those of the Trinity, Christ and the Church, Adrienne lays the foundations for a spirituality of marriage which is embedded in sacramental mystery. In an age where many view the man-woman relationship and the institution of marriage in increasingly banal and worldly ways, it is most important that the spiritual fruitfulness of marriage be highlighted. Towards this end, the “theology of the sexes” is a significant contribution. Spouses who are able to better respond to the underlying fruitfulness of their bodily-spiritual union will be showered abundantly by God’s grace and bring more fruitfulness to the Church and the world.

H. Scriptural: Contemplative Meditation (*kontemplative Betrachtung*)

While various theologians and scholars have studied the realm of marriage and family from a number of theological viewpoints and by drawing on the different scientific disciplines, Adrienne von Speyr remains fixed on the Word of God. Her characteristic, untrained method of contemplating Scripture verse for verse in a straightforward fashion allows for God's word to resonate in the heart of the believer. Firmly grounded in Scripture, Adrienne's writings on marriage and family penetrate to the core of the mysteries of God and man thereby obtaining a particular universality. By attentively gazing on the Son who reveals the Father and the Holy Spirit and by carefully listening to God's word which he lovingly directs to his Bride, the Church, Adrienne is able to see all of the New Testament as an expression of trinitarian life. It seems clear in our exposition and analysis that this active contemplation of the Word of God is an enriching contribution to marriage and family studies.

I. Practical: Matter-of-factness (*Nüchternheit*)

Adrienne von Speyr's practical-spiritual insights in the realm of marriage counseling flow from the anthropological, dogmatic and spiritual foundations of her theology of marriage. One of Adrienne's first books, *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*, was written with the purpose of providing some practical advice for dealing with a number of issues and situations which emerge in marriage preparation and marriage itself. The letters of *Christiane* demonstrate that the realm of marriage and family was very close to Adrienne's heart. It is evident that she saw it as part of her task in life to accompany and advise engaged and married persons in their various life situations and decisions. Drawing from her life experience as a wife, mother, medical doctor and co-founder of a secular institute, she approaches the many challenges of marriage and family with a refreshing matter-of-factness, a profound understanding of the human condition, compassion and piercing astuteness. Because her mode of expression is concrete and down-to-earth, yet deeply spiritual, Adrienne's theology of marriage finds a broad appeal in households, parishes, universities and seminaries. Furthermore, because her advice on marriage matters emerges from a dynamic spiritual theology, it remains universally applicable in changing times and across different cultural boundaries.

II. Meeting the Current Challenges of Marriage and Family Life?

At this point, it is timely to evaluate Adrienne von Speyr's writings in light of the challenges and trends of the current marriage and family studies which were identified at the beginning of this work. In the *General Introduction*, the following four challenges and trends were identified:

1. A stronger link between the sacramentality and spirituality of marriage needs to be shown.
2. It must be better understood how spouses receive matrimonial grace as a couple.
3. The ecclesial understanding of marriage continues to be further developed.
4. Scholars have indicated the need to develop the trinitarian dimension of marriage.

Do Adrienne von Speyr's writings respond to these challenges and trends of current marriage and family studies? On the one hand, one might argue that Adrienne von Speyr's writings should not be compared with current theology of marriage studies since her writings were produced some fifty years ago. Marriage and family studies have made great advancements over that time period. On the other hand, if Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage and family fail to contribute significantly to the current theological investigation, it would be difficult to justify studying them. Therefore, her writings cannot be judged merely on their capacity to anticipate current theology, but also it must be shown that they add something significant to the current dialogue. We will proceed by evaluating Adrienne von Speyr's significant contributions under each of the identified points.

1. The Link Between Sacramentality and Spirituality

In this dissertation, it was shown that Adrienne von Speyr offers some important contributions towards showing the link between sacramentality and spirituality. Adrienne demonstrates that spouses become a "sacramental couple" precisely through their capacity to incarnate the sacraments in their conjugal life. For example, the Eucharist is not merely something to be received by husband and wife to enrich their common life. Rather, Christ's eucharistic self-surrender is to be lived by each spouse even in the mundane demands of daily living. Likewise, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not just a sacrament designed to "clear the slate" of one's soul. On the contrary, husband and wife must try to imitate Christ's total naked vulnerability in his "confession" before the Father and before all of mankind. The more "sacramental" each spouse becomes, the more each spouse fosters one's spiritual life and vice versa.

Furthermore, Adrienne's writings on "the theology of the sexes" demonstrate how the sexual and sacramental spheres of marriage are to be integrated. Adrienne dares to articulate how the conjugal act is an expression of the confessional and eucharistic natures of marriage. As a *confessional* act, loving sexual intercourse is an act of self-revelation, self-entrustment and self-avowal by which the spouses imitate Christ who reveals, entrusts and confesses. As a *eucharistic* act, the conjugal act is an act of body and spirit, superabundance and renunciation. Jesus Christ embodies each of these; Christian spouses imitate and participate in the Lord's self-surrender.

Therefore, in their conjugal relations, spouses are "eucharistic" and "confessional;" they embody what they receive in the sacraments of Eucharist and confession. God's grace sanctifies marital relations; at the same time, the conjugal act can bring grace to the marriage covenant just as other acts of giving and receiving between the spouses can be grace-filled. Adrienne explains that chaste sexual love can lead to greater sanctification of the marriage union. The fostering of chaste sexual relations not only helps spouses grow in their love for each other, but also aids them in growing closer to their Creator and Redeemer. The more a couple appreciates and reveres conjugal love, the more each spouse can inspire the other to greater holiness.

In the *General Introduction*, we cited Carlo Rochetta's observations that conjugal love and the grace of the sacrament of marriage must be articulated as two intertwining realities which comprise the inner mystery of the marriage relationship. Affirming that it is task of dogmatic theology to strengthen its understanding of the unity between conjugal

sexual love and sacramentality, Rochetta explains: “[It] is the human reality of conjugal love which becomes sacrament in the same way in which the sacrament neither negates nor annuls the human reality of conjugal love, but [the sacrament] rejuvenates [conjugal love], supports and sanctifies it, making it participate in the mystery of grace that flows between Christ and the Church.”¹ It seems clear that Adrienne von Speyr provides some valuable insights towards strengthening the understanding of the intertwining realities of conjugal love, spirituality and sacramentality.

2. How Spouses Receive Matrimonial Grace as a Couple

Understanding the link between sacramentality and spirituality in marriage leads to a better understanding of how spouses receive the specific grace of the sacrament of marriage as a couple. In this regard, Adrienne’s insights into the individual prayer life of each spouse are a key contribution. On the one hand, she emphasizes that each spouse is to cultivate an intimate, spiritual relationship with God. On the other hand, she underscores that the marriage union is enriched by the primary spiritual fruitfulness which is often communicated in a veiled, unarticulated and mysterious manner between the spouses. In their reciprocal, “eucharistic” and “confessional” self-giving and receiving, which is a concrete expression of their life-long irrevocable consent, Christian spouses open themselves to receive God’s grace as a couple, indeed, as a unity embraced by the unity of God.

Adrienne’s reflections on the “virginal meaning of the body” also help illuminate how spouses receive matrimonial grace as a couple. Adrienne holds that each time spouses consummate their love for each other, their love retains a certain “virginity” which can be traced to the original synthesis of virginal and bodily fruitfulness in Paradise. The man encounters himself in the woman, as does the woman in the man. Each spouse surrenders oneself to the other, not with the intention of receiving oneself again unchanged, but with the intention of receiving one’s being transformed by the other’s being. The sharing of body and spirit between the spouses is a specific grace of the sacrament of marriage.

Indeed, marriage is the only sacrament which is lived by two individuals, a man and a woman. The more perfectly each spouse surrenders oneself to the other, the more, as a couple, the spouses experience the unique grace of marriage. Moreover, the grace of marriage is fostered by the daily self-surrender of the spouses and through regular reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and confession. In this regard, each time the spouses receive the Eucharist, they are reminded how they, as a couple, participate in Christ’s self-surrender and how each is to embody Christ’s self-sacrifice in their shared life. The full benefit of the grace of the sacrament of marriage requires total participation by each spouse; each spouse must give *all* of oneself. Adrienne underscores in various ways how Christian spouses are called to mutually surrender their thoughts, sentiments, physical effort---indeed all that comprises their spiritual and bodily lives---for the greater benefit of their spousal union.

¹Carlo Rochetta, *Il sacramento della coppia*, 99-100.

3. The Development of an Ecclesial Understanding of Marriage

Adrienne von Speyr contributes towards the further development of an ecclesial understanding of marriage by providing insights into Christ's life and Passion, Mary's ecclesial motherhood, the Christian states of life and the Christo-ecclesial dimension of conjugal love. While Adrienne does not develop the notion of the family as the "domestic Church," an important contribution which would emerge later with the Second Vatican Council, she does offer many other reflections which together form a basis for an ecclesiology of marriage.

Adrienne explains that Christian spouses contribute in an important way to the building up of the Church. On the one hand, when spouses strive for holiness, they strengthen their union to Christ and contribute to the building up of the Church in her members. On the other hand, when spouses experience spiritual, emotional, psychological or physical separation due to sinfulness, they contribute not only to a weakening in their marriage union, but also to an overall weakening in the Church. Marriage and the consecrated life form two states of life within the Church. Each state complements the other; members of each state inspire their counterparts to greater holiness. When one lives faithfully one's state of life, one contributes to the building up of the Church.

Adrienne von Speyr is able to offer a basis for a strong ecclesiology of marriage because her writings in general, and those on marriage in particular, are highly christological and marian. Christ's self-surrender to the Father in the Holy Spirit both sanctifies marriage irreversibly and provides the model for matrimonial sanctification. Christ sanctified marriage from within by being born into a human family and by giving himself on the cross for the sake of his Bride, the Church. Spouses who embody Christ's self-surrender benefit from the fruitfulness which pours forth from the Lord's eternal sacrifice. Mary, too, provides an indispensable model for Christian spouses. Husbands and wives who strive to imitate Mary's active readiness to receive all that constitutes life's peaks and valleys are rewarded with much spiritual fruitfulness.

4. The Trinitarian Dimension of Marriage

In the *General Introduction*, it was emphasized that the trinitarian dimension of Christian marriage must be further developed. By elaborating on the trinitarian dimensions of marriage, the sacrament avoids being defined as only a dual Christ-Church reality. While Adrienne does not provide a comprehensive trinitarian theology of marriage, she does offer a number of insights which could form a basis for one. Above all, Adrienne stresses that spouses not only *imitate*, but also *participate in* the eternal exchange among the divine Persons. She explains that the ordering of the roles in marriage is based on the eternal ordering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the infinite distinctiveness of each of the divine Persons which makes possible their infinite oneness. While there exists an equality of being among the Persons, this does not impede the possibility that the Son might submit himself to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Adrienne interprets the conjugal act in light of the giving and receiving of the Divine Persons. In its most perfect form, the conjugal act is to be understood in a trinitarian way where the man represents the Father, the woman, the Son, and the child, the Holy Spirit. It was shown how von Balthasar adopted Adrienne's line of thought in his

important article on *Humanae Vitae*. Von Balthasar demonstrates that neither the Father nor the Son places any restrictions on their mutual self-surrender in the Spirit. Adrienne's articulation of the Trinity-marriage analogy is an attempt to describe how conjugal love finds its archetype in Christ's eucharistic self-surrender.

Adrienne asserts that the relationship between the Trinity and the family is not only analogous, but also existential. Family members do not only imitate the mutual loving, receiving and giving of the trinitarian Persons, but also they participate in the trinitarian exchange of love. In this way, Adrienne both anticipates and sheds light on the assertion of *Guadium et Spes* 48 that "married love is caught up into divine love." The more spouses and their children grow in appreciation and understanding of how family relationships are truly the "image and likeness" of the divine exchanges among the Persons of the Trinity, the more family members will be drawn into trinitarian life and benefit from the outpouring of grace that is fruit of the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

III. Specific Criticisms

Because few studies have focused on Adrienne von Speyr's writings, specific criticisms directed towards her theology of marriage are not readily available. Nonetheless, at least two authors who have studied von Balthasar's theology of marriage have offered implicit, if not necessarily explicit, criticism of Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage. For example, Rudolph Zwank questions whether Adrienne's experiences in the medical field might have negatively influenced von Balthasar's theology. Since Adrienne often treated patients who suffered from sexual aberrations, would this not have negatively affected her view of human sexuality, and therefore also von Balthasar's, since he benefitted from her theological insights into the sexual realm?² In raising this criticism, Zwank cites neither *Christiane* nor *Theologie der Geschlechter*. Thus, it appears he is not familiar with the two works. Although it may be true that Adrienne did handle some difficult cases dealing with human sexuality in her medical practice, it is clear that a reading of *Christiane* and *Theologie der Geschlechter* would reveal a positive view of human sexuality. Contrary to Zwank's implications, Adrienne's descriptions of the man-woman relationship are permeated by a naturalness of expression and exhibit a positive appreciation for the beauty of human sexuality.

²Cf. R. Zwank, *Geschlechteranthropologie in theologischer Perspektive? Zur Phänomenologie des Geschlechtlichen in Hans Urs von Balthasars "Theodramatik,"* 33. Zwank writes: "In ihrer Arztpraxis ist [A. von Speyr] nur mit den Schattenseiten der Geschlechtlichkeit konfrontiert, die sie heftig abstoßen: "Perversionen" (Homosexualität), Vergewaltigung, Geschlechtskrankheiten ... Darf man nicht annehmen, daß ein solches "Erfahrungsdefizit" Balthasars Geschlechteranthropologie mit beeinflußt?" This point is just one among others in a more extensive critique of von Balthasar's theological perspective of sexuality. Although Zwank begins by noting that he is not qualified to look at Adrienne's and von Balthasar's relationship from a psychological viewpoint, he goes on to give a rather psychological analysis of their spiritual collaboration. His argumentation is convoluted at times and he appears to take some entries from the diaries (*Tagebücher*=NB VIII, IX and X) out of context. He also errs factually when, in referring to diary entries from 1941, he takes the "Ehebuch" to be *Theologie der Geschlechter*. The "Ehebuch" which Adrienne began to write already in 1941 is actually *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*, one of the few books which she wrote in manuscript form. *Theologie der Geschlechter* did not come to fruition until 1946. (pp. 25-32)

Critiquing von Balthasar's theology of marriage, Christoph Kaiser contends that by grounding marriage in the deepest mysteries of the faith, one is left with an ideal that is impossible to attain.³ Perhaps one could make the same criticism of Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, since they too include a strong trinitarian, christological and ecclesial interpretation. Although it is true that Adrienne departs from the most profound mysteries of the faith in her insights on marriage, at the same time, she offers much practical and concrete advice on how to approach certain situations in marriage. Above all, with her insights into marriage, she sheds light on something that is always there---whether or not one is aware of it. Spouses do not necessarily have to be completely aware of all of God's mysteries into which their relationship is enfolded in order to confront certain difficulties that arise in marriage. Nevertheless, by opening themselves to the profound mysteries of their union, spouses are not only enriched in their faith, but also they are given insight into how to handle life's difficulties.

A second criticism which Kaiser directs towards von Balthasar, which one could perhaps also apply to Adrienne von Speyr, regards the theology of the states of life. Kaiser notes that von Balthasar does not allow that there might exist a distinct vocation to marriage as there is to the consecrated life.⁴ In Adrienne's writings on the states of life, it is true that she affirms that there exist only two states of life. Furthermore, although she does hold that both states are holy, she does not necessarily state that one is called to marriage in the same way that one is called to the state of the counsels. This particular point remains open and could be further investigated in Adrienne's theology of marriage.

IV. Closing Remarks

With this work, we have attempted to peer into the inner mysteries of Christian marriage with a new freshness that is indicative of Adrienne von Speyr's charism. As was noted in *Part I*, an important aspect of Adrienne's theological mission lies in her capacity to give Revelation a contemplative deepening and a new vitalization. In a certain sense, her theology represents a form of John Paul II's understanding of "new evangelization." Adrienne confronts the ancient, indeed, eternal truths of the man-woman relationship, but articulates them in a new and unique way. In her sense of God's omnipresence, she sheds light on the mysteries of Christian marriage and in the process brings one to its inner realities.

On a more personal note, in order to illustrate this writer's experience of grappling with Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, we turn to a passage from John's account of the Resurrection:

³Cf. C. Kaiser, *Theologie der Ehe, Der Beitrag Hans Urs von Balthasars*, 209-210: "[Von Balthasar] nimmt keine Rücksicht auf die 'pastorale Vermittelbarkeit' seines Eheverständnis. Diese Vorgehensweise bringt jedoch gerade in der Eheologie kaum überwindbare Schwierigkeiten mit sich. Die starke Einbindung der Ehe in die tiefsten und letztlich unergründlichen Geheimnisse christlichen Glaubens läßt ein hohes Idealbild entstehen, dem keine konkret gelebte Ehe entsprechen kann."

⁴Cf. C. Kaiser, *Theologie der Ehe, Der Beitrag Hans Urs von Balthasars*, 211-212: "Ein entscheidender Punkt für das Verhältnis von Ehe- und Rätestand ist die Frage nach Berufung und Sendung. Den Rätestand kann niemand aus eigener Macht wählen oder ergreifen. [...] Eine derartige ('qualifizierte') Berufung zum Ehestand ist für v. Balthasar ausgeschlossen."

Peter came out with the other disciple, and they both went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.⁵

It has been my experience that Adrienne von Speyr's theology of marriage often resembles the apostle John running towards the tomb of the resurrected Lord. The beloved disciple, spurred on by love and with a strong yearning for truth, runs breathlessly towards the tomb. Like John, Adrienne plunges unpretentiously and unremittingly into the mysteries of God and man. In this work, I have tried to accompany Adrienne, "to run alongside her" so to speak. Moreover, by casting a light on her work, I have attempted to unveil it to that important ecclesial investigation and verification that Peter carries out at the tomb of the risen Lord. Certainly, I am cognizant of not having treated the themes of marriage comprehensively. Because of the quantity, profundity and unsystematic nature of Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, I have been compelled to describe in relatively few words certain mysteries that could be further illuminated by a more articulate and lengthy treatment.

For these reasons, above all, this work is an invitation to continue to study the writings of Adrienne von Speyr. By addressing the *corpus* of her work, we have uncovered a number of themes which could be more fully developed. For example, any of the "nine characteristics" identified above could be material for additional theological investigation. This thesis is a small example of one application of Adrienne von Speyr's charism which, in the spirit of St. Thérèse, the Little Flower and Doctor of the Church, is a theological charism "given from above." Although there may exist the temptation to overlook or ignore this type of theology, perhaps it is precisely this "charismatic theology" that must be grappled with by theologians.

At certain points throughout our treatment, it has been indicated that some of Adrienne's insights on marriage anticipate more contemporary contributions. However, merely being "ahead of its time" is insufficient. If her writings on Christian marriage represent a significant contribution to the current studies on marriage and family, they must be judged in their inherent capacity to deepen the current theological dialogue. By addressing the content of Adrienne von Speyr's writings on marriage, we have attempted to highlight their significant contribution to the contemporary theological discussion.

⁵Jn 20, 2-9.

Appendix A

Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe *Table of Contents*

No.	Original Title of Letter	English Translation	Addressee of Letter
F	Vorwort	Foreword	
1	Von der Aussprache	On Discussion	Eisabeth, young girl, advisee
2	Aufklärung	Explanation	mother
3	Verlobung	Engagement	young, engaged woman
4	Träumerei und Wirklichkeit	Dreams and Reality	Anna, young girl
5	Religiöse Aussprache	Religious Discussion	Dora, young, engaged woman
6	Mischehe oder Konversion?	Mixed Marriage or Conversion?	Carla, young woman
7	Abbrechen Tut Not	Breaking Up is Necessary	single woman w/ boyfriend
8	Wie Weit?	How Far?	single woman w/ boyfriend
9	Brautshau	Bride Show	young, single man
10	Geschlechtsverkehr	Sexual Intercourse	young, engaged woman
11	Die Hochzeitsnacht	The Wedding Night	Peter, young, engaged man
12	Mut zur Ehe	Courage to Wed	Esther, social service worker
13	Beständigkeit in der Ehe	Steadiness in Marriage	Erna, married woman
14	Egoismus zu zweit	Egoism in Two	married woman, pregnant
15	Verspätete Anpassung	Belated Adjustment	Ursula, married woman
16	Eheberatung	Marriage Consultation	woman, counselor

No.	Original Title of Letter	English Translation	Addressee of Letter
17	Ehemüdigkeit	Tiredness in Marriage	Gret, married, pregnant
18	Inciskretion	Indiscretion	woman
19	Die Zerrüttung der Ehe	Shattering of Marriage	Getrud, woman
20	Flucht in der Krankheit	Escape in Sickness	married woman
21	Die Entmutigte Ärztin	The Discouraged Doctor	woman, Catholic doctor
22	Schwangerschafts- unterbrechung	Abortion	friend of pregnant woman
23	Die Ledige Mutter	The Unmarried Mother	Selma, wife of social worker
24	Das Alter	Old Age	elderly woman
25	Das Gebet in der Ehe	Prayer in Marriage	Helen, married woman
26	Standeswahl	Choice of a State of Life	Theres, single woman
27	Die Mutter Sibylles an Christianes Mutter	Sibylle's Mother to Christiane's Mother	Christiane's mother
28	Christianes Mutter an Sibylles Mutter	Christiane's Mother to Sibylle's Mother	Sibylle's mother
29	Sibylle an Christiane	Sibylle to Christiane	Christiane
30	Christiane an Sibylle	Christiane to Sibylle	Sibylle

Appendix B: Topics Treated in *Christiane, Briefe über Liebe und Ehe*

Topic	Treated in Letter Number*
Divine foundation of matrimony	6
Children as a blessing of matrimony	12, 14
Education of children	2, 12, 19, 23
Conjugal faith, mutual sanctification	5, 6, 25
Conjugal love	6, 10
Mothers as the heart of the family	20
Single motherhood	23
Primacy of husband, subordination of wife	10
Indissolubility of marriage	7, 12, 13
Perfecting grace of matrimony	6, 25
Evils of contraception, misused love	10
Abortion	21, 22, 23
Medical doctor and Magisterium	F, 21
Sterilization	10, 23
Adultery	10
Marriage as Sacrament	10
Mixed Marriage	5, 6
Divorce	19, 23
Marriage preparation	4, 27
Choosing a partner	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Economic security	17

*For letter number designation, see Appendix A

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